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From the Editors

Charley Koenig

Wrapping up our thirteenth year of publication, the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* presents this exciting new issue. Included are a variety of articles from undergraduates, graduates, and writing instructors, each providing significant and compelling research into pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory (P-CHAT), uptake, and more. These thirteen new articles range in focus from antecedent knowledge and discourse communities to how learning new literacies are essential to successful baking experiments and working with Instacart. In the Writing Program at Illinois State University, we use a version of CHAT specifically aimed toward pedagogy. This is because the *GWRJ* informs and is informed by the first-year composition courses that make up its discourse community. Our pedagogical version of CHAT includes seven terms that provide a framework around which students interrogate texts and genres as they exist in the world while accounting for the nuanced and dynamic nature of such texts.

We feature thirteen new articles, ranging from authors engaging with the ways in which P-CHAT is at work within the many activity systems we use to the different modalities and tools we employ to produce texts. As we continue to expand the scope of the journal, these articles include nuanced conversations about how our writing and learning habits continue to change and transform from the pandemic due to the different literacies we use across the various jobs we work. These articles take a closer look at what literate activity means and the different ways it shows up and transforms our lives. What we continue to find so important about these articles is their consistent focus on communities. As we continue to work and live in a global pandemic, these articles express the ways we use what genres we have, as well as how we learn about new genres we are unfamiliar with, using our antecedent knowledge and writing research to form new connections and reconnect with ourselves and our learning practices through the use of our pandemic literary spaces.

These articles also feature different ISU Writing Program Learning Outcomes through research into the multimodality of henna art, reading people as a genre, and left-handed literacies. With this latest issue, we also had the opportunity to work with Editor-in-Chief and returning *Grassroots* author Joyce R. Walker on a pair of interrelated pieces, an article on risk assessment and a graphic short about a suspect water bottle. Certainly, the work of the contributors to this issue continues to expand our collective understanding of the multifaceted nature of genres and the work of writing and researching in the world. We hope you enjoy this new issue as much as we do.

To start issue 13.2, we have **Cassandra Karn's** take on the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and how its success is the result of breaking genre conventions. Cassandra discusses how three of the seven P-CHAT terms, reception, socialization, and distribution, helped to fuel multiple remediations of this text. Our second article, written by **Ridita Mizan**, focuses on henna application as a complex literate activity. Ridita also employs P-CHAT to explore and analyze this ancient, multimodal art form. Next, **Nenagh Gedge** takes P-CHAT in yet another direction, using terms like reception and socialization to examine common misconceptions about diabetes. Nenagh seeks to use this discussion to inform readers about the impact of these misunderstandings on those with diabetes. Following, **Bethany Ebert** introduces us to a discourse community built around documenting found floss picks. Bethany combines P-CHAT analysis and exploration of multimedia composing to illustrate the complexity of this community's literate activity.

The next four articles highlight the specific ways in which uptake and antecedent knowledge come up in various contexts, including true crime, hair color, baking shows, and career trajectories. In her article, **Kaylee DeBoe** traces the remediation of true crime genres and how this might lead to romanticizing such content. Kaylee discusses the ethical considerations of consuming, receiving, and remediating these texts. Then we have **Alicia Shupe's** article, in which she describes her changes in hair color over the years. Alicia emphasizes the importance of genre analysis and convention when reading people as one might read a text. Afterward, **Ashton Myerscough** moves us into a baking experiment in which she attempts to tackle a challenge from *The Great British Baking Show*. Documenting this journey for us, Ashton explains the process of assessing and expanding her baking knowledge and skills. Following, in a *Grassroots* Co-Interview, **Madi Kartcheske** and **Jenn Tullos** talk through their ever-evolving understandings of writing and their writing research identities. By exploring these understandings through different contexts and environments, Madi and Jenn are able to complicate their notions of uptake and antecedent knowledge.

Next, **Danielle Eldredge** focuses on expanding our definition and understanding of creativity. By looking at her own K-pop song recommendation list, Danielle demonstrates how seemingly mundane aspects of a text like color-coding and footnotes can be seen as creative. In the following graphic short article, **Janine Blue** shares her experiences as a left-handed writer in a right-hand–dominated world. Through a series of images and text, Janine is able to shed light on the tools and literacies necessary for left-handed writing success. Then we have **Chamelia Moore's** detailed examination of the many embodied literacies and literate activities involved in working for Instacart, a grocery delivery service. Here Chamelia lays out the different vocabulary, skills, knowledge, processes, and even bodily memories and emotions involved and evoked in working as an Instacart shopper. Lastly, **Joyce R. Walker** brings us two companion pieces that illustrate the complexity of how humans assess risk. In her full-length article, Joyce explores various risk assessment literacies, including those processes that occur unconsciously. Then, in her graphic short article, Joyce portrays an example of such assessment literacies playing out as she shows her class encountering an abandoned (and risky) bottle of water.

The 13.2 issue concludes with a reprinting of "Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*," which seeks to encourage prospective writers to submit their rigorous investigations of how people, tools, and situations affect writing in complex ways. As we finish our thirteenth year of publication, we continue to receive many submissions from writing researchers interested in publishing their studies in the journal. In the coming year, we hope to receive even more submissions that reflect a diversity of perspectives, explore a variety of distinctive genres, and provide a richer understanding of the culturally and historically bound spaces in which those genres are embedded.

Notes

“Tonight, My Unconventional Conventionists, You Are to Witness a New Breakthrough”: How Shadow Casts of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* Remind Us to Break Genre Conventions

Cassandra Karn

You might think that genres are rigid—that there are specific conventions to each genre that should be followed in order to have something recognized as that particular genre. However, sometimes genre conventions are meant to be bent or even broken. In this article, Cassandra Karn demonstrates that *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* exists as a prime example of how breaking genre conventions can be exactly what a text needs.

Introduction

Every October, an assortment of queer people, theatre people, and horror fans don fishnets and red lipstick—regardless of their gender—and flock to the local theatre or cinema to partake in a beloved tradition: *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* shadow casts. I should know; I am a proud member of all three groups. I'm genderqueer and bisexual, two complicated and fluid queer identities, so I and many other queer people find ourselves represented in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which doesn't put particular labels on the genders or sexualities of the characters, leaving them complicated, fluid, and open for interpretation. I've been involved in theatre for over eight years now, so I appreciate the theatrical origins of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, as well as the return to theatrical practices with the development of the shadow cast. I'm also an avid fan of the horror genre, particularly monster movies, which are much of the inspiration for the schlocky style of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

I cannot count the number of times I've filed into a theatre dressed as one character or another. I've also been on the other side of the shadow cast event, performing on stage with other *Rocky Horror* fanatics. The energy in the theatre space used for a shadow cast of *Rocky Horror* is electric, always alive and active. It's never the same show twice. You never know what might be shouted out from the audience next, what new callout someone might have come up with this year. More than anything else, the sense of community involved in these shadow casts is what keeps me coming back year after year. Before the Internet gave us the ability to find people with similar interests, *Rocky Horror* shadow casts were a way for these groups of people to find each other and share their love for the bizarre, the schlocky, the deviant. *Rocky Horror* shadow casts were, and still are, a place where everyone could celebrate their oddness, instead of being shunned for it. For a few hours, the rules of the outside world no longer apply; we, the unconventional conventionists, can party without fear of judgment. It should be no surprise, then, that shadow casts of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* quickly became a beloved tradition for many—usually a Halloween tradition if not a year-round one.

Let's back up for a moment. I've spent all this time talking about shadow casts, but I haven't really explained what they are. **Shadow casts** are a style of performance where a film is shown on a screen while actors dressed as the characters mime the actions in front of the screen. A crucial component of shadow casts is audience participation; audiences often dress up, shout phrases—known as **callouts**—on cue, and perform various actions, such as holding newspapers over their heads when a character does so on screen. Shadow casts were created from the breaking of genre conventions, and by examining how they developed, we can consider how, sometimes, breaking genre conventions can be more useful than adhering to them.

What Is *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*?–"It's Probably Some Kind of Hunting Lodge for Rich Weirdos"

The Rocky Horror Picture Show is a film musical that follows the misadventure of Brad and Janet, a young, white, heterosexual couple who are newly engaged. Their car breaks down during a storm outside a spooky castle, where they go to find shelter from the storm and make a phone call. They are instead pulled into a party celebrating the birth of Rocky, a man created to satiate the sexual desires of the mad scientist Dr. Frank N. Furter—a queer man who also dresses like a woman. In fact, almost all the characters that Brad and Janet encounter in this castle are queer, monstrous, and sexually active, and it isn't long before Brad and Janet give in to their own sexual desires for various characters. Mix in plenty of science fiction and horror tropes, and you have the movie that quickly became a **cult classic**—a film that doesn't do well in the box office but later develops a passionate and devoted fan base.

"I Can Make You a Man": How Are Genres Created and Sustained over Time?

Part of what makes *The Rocky Horror Show* (as the original stage show was titled) stand out is how many times it was remediated into new genres. **Genre** is a type of production—such as a movie, a résumé, or even a street sign—that can be identified by its conventions, or its standard practices and features (ISU Writing Program). The conventions of a genre are what make a production recognizable as that specific genre, so it is helpful to follow those conventions when producing a text within a particular genre. However, there are times when breaking genre conventions can make a text stand out. For example, breaking the fourth wall—when characters directly address the audience—originally broke the genre convention of keeping the action onstage (or on-screen) separated from the audience, but it is now a beloved comedic genre convention, appearing in films such as *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Deadpool*. A creator must be careful not to break *too* many genre conventions, though, as it will make that text unrecognizable as a part of that genre. Instead, creators must decide on a case-by-case basis which genre conventions they will adhere to, which conventions they will bend, and which conventions they will break, all based on what will best suit that particular production.

The Rocky Horror Show was remediated twice: first from a stage musical to a film, and then from a film to a shadow cast. These remediations were made possible through a range of **literate activity**—all the activities that are part of creating or consuming a text. Literate activity is what fuels ISU's **pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory** (P-CHAT), an approach to texts that focuses on literate activity grounded in cultural and historical contexts (ISU Writing Program). There are a few terms used in P-CHAT that are particularly useful in looking at how *Rocky Horror* broke genre conventions with great success: reception, distribution, and socialization. In the case of *The Rocky Horror Show*, the **reception** of the audience—how the text was taken up by the audience and repurposed—fueled the multiple remediations of the text. Because of the reception of the text, the **distribution** of the text—when, where, and how the text can be accessed—was changed as well. Finally, the second remediation, from film to shadow cast, created a setting for complex **socialization**—the interactions between the people involved in the creating or consuming of a text (ISU Writing Program). The socialization that occurs during shadow casts is an example of how the lines between the performers and the audience blur, creating a double role for the audience as both creator and consumer.

"It Was a Night Out They Were Going to Remember for a Very Long Time": A Brief History of *The Rocky Horror Show*

In 1972, Richard O'Brien began to write *The Rocky Horror Show*, inspired by science fiction and horror **B movies**—low-budget movies made within a particular genre, such as horror and science fiction—and rock 'n' roll, particularly punk rock and the emerging **glam rock**, a subgenre of rock 'n' roll characterized by flashy clothing and gender nonconformity (Thompson 37; see Figure 1). The glam rock musical stylings of *Rocky Horror* were quite the departure from the usual show tunes used in musical theatre. While *Rocky Horror* was not the first rock musical to push back against the genre conventions of musical theatre, it was certainly one of the landmark musicals to do so.

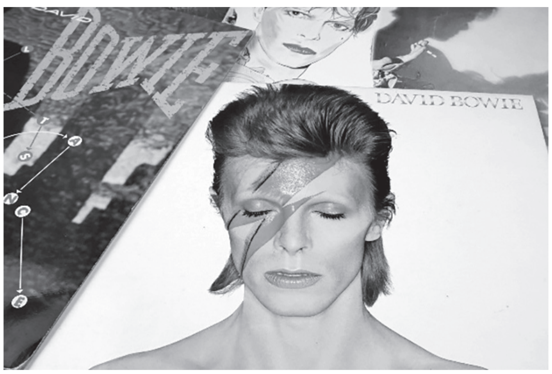

Figure 1: An example of the glam rock aesthetic ("Close up").

The musical stylings were not the only genre conventions broken by *The Rocky Horror Show*. The show was only performed during late-night showings, as the music was so loud that it would disrupt the shows on the other floors of the building. Instead of having a regular staff to take care of tickets and seating, cast members of the show dressed up as ushers and did the work (Thompson 91). The cast members broke the conventions of normal usher duties by purposely mis-seating people, separating people who were attending the show together, and creating chaos and confusion in a variety of other ways. The theatre space itself even transgressed conventions when it was transformed to look like a run-down cinema, including torn-up cinema seats instead of the regular seating, dirty floors, cobwebs, and to top it all off, a sign that apologized for the inconvenience, explaining that the cinema was undergoing renovations (Thompson 92). Breaking the conventions of the theatre space itself was quite the risk; it could have been off-putting to the audience, causing people to leave poor reviews, which could shut down the show early. However, this breaking of genre conventions contributed heavily to the musical's success; the show received glowing reviews upon opening. By the end of opening week, the cast had become stars, and people were lining up to get into the tiny theatre to watch *The Rocky Horror Show* (Thompson 94).

"It's Just a Jump to the Left": Remediating *Rocky Horror* from Stage to Screen

Multiple changes had to be made to *The Rocky Horror Show* when adapting it for the big screen (Figure 2), the most surface-level being the addition of "Picture" to the title to denote that it was indeed a "picture show" now, as opposed to its earlier form as a stage show. The pacing of the show was slowed down, as the film had no need to keep a nonstop pace. Many explicit sexual jokes were removed from the script as well, toning down the still very sexual and queer story for a wider audience. The grimier punk aesthetics were softened, and the shiny, glittery glam rock aesthetics were more heavily emphasized. In these ways, the remediation of *Rocky Horror* from stage musical to film was fairly standard; these changes were made in order to adhere to the conventions of the film genre—particularly the wider audience. Theatre as a medium is usually viewed by a smaller, more eclectic audience who would be more open to a grimier, queerer, and more explicit show. Film, on the other hand, is usually for a wider audience—due in part to its accessibility. When adapted to film, potentially alienating aspects of the show—the grimy punk aesthetics, the explicit queer and sexual content—were toned down to appeal to a wider audience. By following the conventions of the new genre it was inhabiting, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* should have been set for success when it opened in cinemas.

Figure 2: A screenshot from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

This was not the case. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* premiered in cinemas in 1975, and the reception was lukewarm at best, both in the United Kingdom and the United States (Thompson 169). *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* was turning out to be a failure. However, the head of advertising noticed that the few people who *were* watching the movie were dedicated; the same people would attend the film time after time, usually in costume, sometimes singing along (Thompson 171). The head of advertising then made the decision to move the film from the usual big showings to midnight matinees, usually reserved for low-budget films (Thompson 173). The film, despite its adherence to genre conventions, could not thrive in a mainstream, highly commercialized environment. It was better suited for something underground, where it could develop a fan following. The reception of the film, both in its failure in the mainstream and in its fan following during the midnight matinees, changed the distribution of the film. Without the permutations of this interconnected activity system, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* might have been a flop that was soon forgotten. Instead, it became a cult classic that would spawn its own new genre.

"We Are Ready for the Floor Show": The Creation of Shadow Casts

Attending midnight matinees of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* became a routine outing for fans of the film, often going to see the film on a weekly basis. Fans would dress up as the characters and sing along with the songs, but not much more. However, one night a member of the audience at one of the showings yelled at the screen: "Buy an umbrella, you cheap bitch!" in response to Janet putting a newspaper over her head during the storm (Thompson 175–6). Yelling during a movie is a blatant break with the conventions of the literate activity of watching a film. However, this breaking of convention spawned a new way to interact with the film, one that is a beloved tradition that continues to this day. Soon after the first instance, interjections became commonplace in cinemas across the country. Callouts are now a regular part of viewing *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, with a combination of standard callouts—calling Brad an "asshole" and Janet a "slut"—and local variations on others. One of my personal favorites is to yell, "What's for dinner?" during the dinner scene, and when the dead body of Eddie—played by the musician Meat Loaf—is revealed, to groan, "Meatloaf again?!"

It didn't stop with callouts, either. Eventually, viewing *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* turned into shadow casts, a new genre of performance combining the film with theatrical performance and audience participation. Shadow casts merge the film performance with a theatrical performance by having a local cast onstage in front of the film, dressed as the characters, miming the on-screen actions, as you would in a theatrical performance (Figure 3). However, the film provides the entirety of the audio, with the actors only lip-syncing to the dialogue, which keeps the shadow cast from being solely a theatrical performance. An additional performance aspect is added when the audience yells callouts at the screen and live actors, often riffing off each other. The audience also participates in more physical ways, such as throwing rice during the weddings, holding a newspaper over their heads when it is raining on-screen, and dancing along to the "Time Warp." Additionally, the audience dresses up as their favorite characters, further blurring the lines between the actors on the screen, the actors on the stage, and the audience. The shadow cast, then, is a merging of genres and performance styles, blending the film performance with the theatrical performance and the audience performance.

Figure 3: Augustana College's 2019 shadow cast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Murrin).

I've been participating in shadow casts of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* for six years now in three different cities, and it is one of my most beloved traditions. No matter how many I've been a part of, I've never been to a shadow cast that was the same as the one before it. Every year brings a new cast who make new choices in their performances, as well as new audience members who shout new callouts, either of their own creation or borrowed from their own local tradition. The text of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is constantly being transformed in little ways through the socialization that occurs during the show. Sometimes, audience members even riff off each other, responding to the callouts of other audience members. The organic nature of socialization means that every performance is unique and reliant on the audience to help in its creation.

"Wild and Untamed Thing": Maybe We Should Be Breaking Conventions More Often

All of these beloved traditions were originally transgressions of conventions. Instead of adhering to the genre conventions of *just* film or *just* theatre, fans decided to merge both, creating a new genre from the melding of the two. Additionally, the conventions of the literate activity of watching a film were discarded entirely. Audience members are rowdy, loud, and physically active during the film, instead of sitting quietly. When watching a film conventionally, it is easy to think that watching a film is the activity of an isolated individual. Shadow casts demonstrate how watching a movie *is* a social activity; it is part of the network of activity that is essential to any text's existence. The reception of the audience—the way dedicated fans watched the film time after time and repurposed it into an outing of dressing up, singing along, shouting, and throwing items about—created a whole new genre. In this new genre of shadow casts, socialization occurs between the performers and the audience, creating a space where the audience is also performing, where both performers and audience-performers are reshaping the text night after night. This example of breaking conventions shows us just how much can be gained when we don't strictly adhere to genre conventions. Sometimes rules are better off broken, and from that destruction, we can create something extraordinary.

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Cassandra Karn is a Master's student in the English department studying literature and cultural studies. She is particularly interested in monsters, queerness, and theatre. When not teaching, reading, or writing, you can find her talking to trees or concocting absurdist performances.

Notes


ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
MY VETERAN'S PROP BAG
ROCKY HORROR
WEDDING
TISSUES
THERE'S A LIGHT
THE DENTON -TIMES-
LOCAL TEENS SAY THEY WERE KIDNAPPED BY SEXY ALIENS
NEWSPAPER
SPRAY BOTTLE
FAKE CANDLE
LABORATORY
NOISE MAKERS
CONFETTI
GREAT SCOTT
TOILET PAPER
DINNER SCENE
FAKE WINE GLASS
PARTY HAT
I'M GOING HOME
PLAYING CARDS

Shades of Henna

Ridita Mizan

Although henna art is generally considered a means of decorating the body, this ancient art form can also be thought of as a complex literate activity. In this article, Ridita Mizan uses pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory (P-CHAT) to explore different functions of henna art. She analyzes women's use of this literate activity and illustrates how it is employed to define and communicate their senses of self.

A Walk Down Memory Lane

I remember waking up to the mild, indistinct chatter of noise outside and the sweet scent of henna paste before Eid days. I would open my eyes to see Maa quickly move the curtains of the bedroom windows and rush back to the kitchen to switch off the stove. Curling up with the pillow, I would softly close my eyes, trying to smell the raw, muddy aroma of freshly ground henna. We would make the paste ourselves, taking henna leaves off the small plants in our garden. Sometimes the paste would not hold, and we would make it again. Fifteen-year-old me would rush to the garden, swiftly grabbing more leaves and throwing some into the mixture to make the paste less runny. (We used to grind the henna with a pestle, using our hands, but now we have an electric grinder.) I'd wonder whether putting some sugar into the paste would improve the dye's tone and make it last longer. I'd also wonder, "Should I add a few drops of lemon juice instead, or do I increase the amount of sugar and see how it goes?" I would experiment in my head, weighing all the local knowledge that I had gathered from my playmates and other henna enthusiasts. I would not want it to be brown, nor pale orange. I

Figure 1: My henna art on Eid.

would plan for a perfect maroon-red henna art, and that's all I needed for it to truly feel like Eid. After preparing the paste, I would make a nice design and let the dye dry, sometimes for a few hours and, if possible, overnight. I would smell my hands often, smiling at the design and showing it off to all. Our house would also smell like henna, and I'd bask in the henna-flavored air. Soon the dried dye would start to fall off, revealing the maroon-red lines drawn on my hands. With the shades of henna, it would start to feel like Eid.

Henna is used in different cultures to create dye and make art on bodies. Henna dye is prepared by crushing the raw leaves of the five-foot henna plant. After mixing the crushed henna plant with water or oil, a paste is created. The paste is then applied using plastic cones, sticks, or even bare hands to create intricate designs on hands, feet, and other body parts, usually on women.

The earliest use of henna is indeterminate, but its cosmetic use takes us back to Egypt five thousand years ago when people are said to have used it to paint their nails (Roome). Henna has a rich cultural and historical background, making it a common thread in a variety of contexts, including the Muslim and Hindu religions. Henna is considered holy by Muslims, which is why it is a special part of Eid celebrations and other Islamic festivals in many countries of the world (Lesmana). It is used in many Indian cultures, too, making it an integral part of Hindu ceremonies such as wedding rituals (Chaudhri and Jain). Henna art, thus, is a tool that transcends religions, cultures, and borders. It can, therefore, be regarded as a unifying force among women, a common ground that allows women to relate to one another irrespective of their nation, class, or creed.

Around the World

Included here are some images of different kinds of henna art, created for different occasions in different contexts, including for Eid celebrations and weddings (Figures 2–7).

Figure 2: A South Asian bride wears henna during a traditional Bengali Hindu Brahmin wedding (Ganguly).

Figure 3: Alongside a modern white wedding dress, an African bride wears henna tattoos (Msirikale).

Figure 4: On Chaand Raat, which marks the sighting of the moon one day before the Muslim festival of Eid, girls decorate themselves with intricate designs of henna (Zainab).

Figure 5: Brides and bridesmaids apply henna designs on their hands the day before a wedding celebration (Jain).

Figure 6: A Somali singer wears henna while performing at Eid celebrations in Mogadishu (UNSOM).

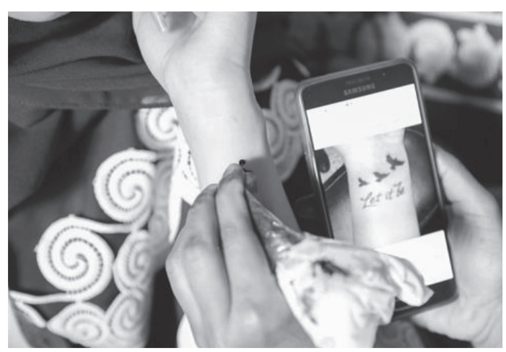

Figure 7: Among Saudi women, henna traditions have been passed down from generation to generation (Thinktech86).

Activity systems refer to "cooperative interactions aimed at achieving a goal" (ISU Writing Program).

Literate activity refers to processes involving reading, writing, learning, and cognition.

The **sensory organs** include the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin.

Henna art is often loaded with deep religious and cultural undertones involving complex **activity systems**. So, when Western celebrities are seen wearing henna on various nonreligious occasions, it sparks debate about cultural appropriation (Stutz). Some consider it problematic, while others welcome henna art as a flexible genre that transcends specific, personal, and communal categories. While there are controversies surrounding the popular use of henna as an art form, it also seems to bind people together, creating a sense of community through its many shades.

The elaborate **literate activity** of creating henna art involves most of the **sensory organs**, which makes it a rather sophisticated tool for connecting and communicating. From the symbols to the shades, to the experimentations, the henna art process communicates and gives meaning. Henna design and application invite rich conversation and laughter among people, oftentimes irrespective of their gender. While women talk about their days, they speak of wanting stronger colors on their skin because it looks better, desiring a particular shade because of its meaning, and relaxing in a familiar setting with their community—men might chime in too, teasing and sharing stories, brightening up the day and having a good time together.

Henna art, thus, is a literate activity through which women express themselves, communicate their values, and connect with others during festivals and special times. It is a code through which women speak of their femininity, the way they own their femininity, and share their femininity with the world. Its symbolism is culture-specific, and meanings are interpreted differently depending on the traditions surrounding the art. As seen in the figures shared previously, it can be used in interpersonal and intergenerational communication as well, where the symbols embedded in the design of the henna may carry meanings of beautification and celebration.

A Multimodal Literate Activity

Although henna art does not always involve actual written letters, it is possible to approach it as a language and, therefore, a literate activity with **literate goals**. Henna dye is used on women's bodies to create art, which can be viewed as an alternative means of communication—a new medium fusing the dye, the design, and the body. There is also complex **multimodal composing** going on in the designs, involving the visual, oral, symbolic, and alphabetic modes (ISU Writing Program). The fusion of the animate, inanimate, articulate, and implied modes in henna texts creates a multilayered message, encapsulating the personal, social, cultural, political, and religious, which shows the scope of the genre and the complex nature of henna art as a multimodal literate activity.

Literate goals are targets involving reading, writing, learning, and cognition.

Multimodal composing considers all the modes of human communication, including "Alphabetic (stuff we write using the alphabet), Visual (pictures), Aural (sound), Oral (spoken) and Symbolic (using symbols that aren't alphabetic, like emoticons or emojis)" (ISU Writing Program).

P-CHAT Terms (Kostecki):			
Production deals with the means through which a text is produced.	**Representation** highlights the way the people who produce a text conceptualize and plan it.	**Distribution** involves the consideration of where texts go and who might take them up.	**Reception** deals with how a text is taken up and used by others.
Socialization describes the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute, and use texts.	**Activity** is a term that encompasses the actual practices that people engage in as they create text.	**Ecology** points to the physical, biological forces that exist beyond the boundaries of any text we are producing.	

In Figures 1 through 7, traditional henna art can be seen where designs are drawn on women's hands, often as part of a celebration. These images represent both the conventional aspect of henna art as makeup and decoration of bodies, as well as a unifying factor among women where the art is used to **represent** friendship and solidarity. The **production** of these texts involves henna dye, floral designs, women's bodies, and cameras. The design process of the henna art can be broken down into segments of preparing henna dye, planning the actual design, applying the dye to a body, and drying the dye in the open air. All these segments indicate times when women interact, negotiate, and collaborate with one another surrounding the occasion of making art out of henna and their bodies. The ritual of applying henna is not just an event, it is an excuse for women to connect and relate through art and the process of creating something together. It is a **socializing** event, where along with henna art, relationships are produced and strengthened. Even though the designs drawn on each hand seem somewhat similar, the subtleties often consist of personal preferences as women usually do like to have a say on the henna designs that they get. Even small details, like whether the design will cover all the fingers or only part of them, can be instances of great discussion and negotiation between the henna artist and the recipient. Such instances represent moments when domestic women get to have a voice, albeit minor, which in some cases may be the closest that they get to the ideas of autonomy and agency. Let's consider Figures 4 and 5, where girls and women show off their henna art together. I can say from my experience that taking these kinds of photos in these very poses is quite common among women. They pose together in glee to show off their dyed hands and take photos during celebrations. I have taken such photos with my friends, and I have seen other women posing in a similar manner to capture their moment of consolidation and camaraderie. The production of henna art in those two photos especially is a complex literate activity where the designs imply a celebration of domestic femininity as well as the bond between women as beings bound by shared experiences. **Distribution**, in this case, involves how henna art is used as a tool for women's communication with fellow women. The art is usually shown off and talked about by women. This is a way women celebrate events, creating occasions for not only adding color but also for being together and socializing. The distribution here signifies quality time, as well as a celebration of fleeting moments of impermanent colors, which can only be captured in photos and not in real life. The transient nature of henna art, thus, problematizes the implications of its distribution. On one hand, the impermanence of henna dye indicates the momentary joys of women. On the other hand, when commodified and sold as artifacts on stock photography websites, the captures can signify objectification of women's bodies on public platforms like the Internet, which is indicative of the further exploitation of domestic women's transitory joys.

A Sociocultural Tradition

As a girl born and brought up in a Muslim household in Bangladesh, henna art is a large part of my festivities. Applying henna, therefore, is not just about fun. There is a sense of auspiciousness associated with henna art, and it is seen as a "good practice" in terms of religion as well as culture. Being a part of this sociocultural tradition, I was introduced to henna art early on in my childhood. I was in awe of those who could draw intricate henna designs. I also learned some rules about henna as well, one of which was that only women should apply henna art to decorate their bodies. If a man applies it, then it's assumed that either he is doing it as a joke or he's "confused." People might question his masculinity or his understanding of the **ecological** context. This henna rule is region- and culture-specific, which could be considered an element of sexism when it is embedded in a culture with strict gender roles. In my cultural context, only brides apply henna art, not grooms. It is interesting, then, that while "Henna" is a common name for women in many countries, including Bangladesh, the Bangla term for henna, "Mehedi," is a very common male name, but not a female one, in South Asia.

Thus, like many other things in this world, the arbitrariness of culture-specific henna rules can be used to sustain and perpetuate heteronormative gender roles. I did not see this problematic element of henna art early in my life. Now that I am beginning to understand how it can be another tool that enables internalized misogyny and patriarchal values, I am finding myself questioning my values through my genre research of henna art. This identity crisis involves a growing awareness of conflicting interests and, therefore, contradictory values. On one hand, I have such an intimate relationship with the art form. On the other, I would never like to be someone who enables or even tolerates oppressive power dynamics. I do not think I will ever want to give up henna art, at least not the good things that are part of its ecology. To understand its scope as a literate activity beyond being a means of decoration that "enhances" the beauty of female bodies, I'll discuss it as a tool for women's communication and illustrate how, just as any tool, it can be used in both progressive and regressive ways.

The event of India's #MehandiProtest is a great example in this regard; the genre of henna art evolved into protest signs. On December 11, 2019, the Indian Government authorized the Citizenship Amendment Act (Bhat). It triggered thousands to protest the proposed National Register of Citizens, which did not include any reference to Muslims and refugees from other communities who fled from neighboring countries after 2014 and were living in India for a while (Bhat). As shown in Figures 8, 9, and 10, women used henna dye on their bodies, creating protest signs out of themselves, to raise their voices against unjust governmental policies. The **production** of these texts

Figures 8 and 9: India's #MehandiProtest (Whitehead).

Figure 10: More from India's #MehandiProtest (Sweeney).

involved henna dye, political awareness, slogans, solidarity, women's bodies, and cameras. The **distribution** of the texts required the Internet, through which the images became part of the subversion, resistance, and activism narrative. Their **reception** included political awareness and assertion of agency, and through creative **socialization**, henna art was transformed from a passive social construct to an active communication tool with the power to challenge the dominant discourse and demand social change. Women's bodies, here, are redeemed from timid object-like backgrounds to subjective selves, capable of having strong opinions and agency. In these texts, women are seen to express themselves not just through soft symbolic floral representations that sometimes contain the initials or names of their partners, suggesting ownership and denoting social status. Although I can't be sure about the decisions these women actually intended to convey with the messages written on their hands, the celebration of solidarity through protest nonetheless positions them as individuals having active political identities and who are capable of contributing as radical social agents.

Aesthetically, the two types of henna art show different sensibilities in terms of production and distribution. In contrast to the henna designs in Figures 1 through 7 (carefully drawn, pretty), the designs of Figures 8, 9, and 10 are hasty and focused on delivering a clear message rather than being pretty. Henna texts as protest signs, therefore, subvert not only the genre of henna art but, in this process, women's bodies too. By using women's hands as platforms to express important messages that have long-lasting implications for societies and the world, it reveals the scope of new identities for women, their bodies, and the genre itself. Just as with any language, the meaning of a particular instance of henna art is built through the way that it is produced, distributed, and received, where both the dye and the bodies are mere media.

The Production and Distribution of the Body

The making of henna art requires two distinct media: one is the dye, and the other is the body. We have discussed production and distribution mainly in terms of the dye, but let us now consider the body as a medium for henna art. Although it is impossible to separate the body from the henna text—the two together creating the art form—it is helpful to think about the implications of the body as a canvas for a communicative text. When the human body is used as a backdrop, an important aspect of the art becomes the question of ownership and control. Does the body own the message, or is it the other way around? It is a critical question, as the meaning of art largely depends on the interpretation of the interconnectedness of the self, the body, and the art. If the self owns both the body and the art, then the message conveyed becomes a vehicle to communicate one's values through henna art. If the body is the vessel that contains the self and the art, then the message is not just the values of an individual, rather it is a shared lived experience, a communication through and among bodies where messages are conveyed not via human language but through abstraction, which involves blurred lines and the fusion of different media. If the art owns the body, then the meaning depends on the artist who applies the dye or who conceptualizes the design. In this way, the production of the body can vary depending on the interpretation, which then creates possibilities of different interpretations based on who owns what and how. The control of meaning, then, lies with ownership.

Through the Internet, the distribution of henna art and its message can now be spread worldwide. The images of henna art can travel to many places without censorship. This creates a broader scope of the art, where it has the possibility to be seen and get interpreted in various ways. This gives henna art, like any other art form, greater ways to inspire people and invoke change. However, the interpretation of henna art in terms of ownership and control dictates its distribution and how much the message will spread. To illustrate this point, let's discuss the multimodal texts of Figures 11 and 12.

Bangladeshi actor and model Shamsunnahar Smrity, popularly known as Pori Moni, was arrested in a case filed under the Narcotics Control Act on August 4, 2021 ("Bangladesh Actress"). Her arrest and the subsequent approval of three days of remand occurred two months after she accused Nasir Uddin Mahmood, a real estate businessman and a presidium member of the parliamentary opposition party of the country, of attempted rape and murder ("Bangladesh Actress"). Pori Moni was denied bail multiple times and remained in jail for twenty-seven days ("Pori Moni Gets Bail"). Figure 11 shows Pori Moni on September 1, 2021, upon her release ("Pori

Figure 11: Actress Pori Moni wearing henna art ("Pori Moni's Message").

Figure 12: Pori Moni again posing with henna art ("High Court Orders").

Moni's Message"). She flaunts henna text written on her palm, which she uses to communicate a specific message with a specific audience. Her henna text reads, "Don't ❤️❤️❤️ Me Bitch 🖕." Here, the use of emojis as loaded symbols, along with English words written in henna dye on the body of a Bangladeshi actress-model, makes the henna text a richly complex, multimodal, cross-cultural, and sociopolitical phenomenon. Figure 12 is an image of Pori Moni after the High Court ordered magistrates to explain the approval of her remand ("High Court Orders"). This time she shares another message written with henna. Here her text reads, "🖕 ME MRE."

If the body owns the art and the self, then the overall body language is part of the message too. Pori Moni, being a person in show business, created performances after her release from jail, where the henna text plays a central and pivotal role in demonstrating her personal and political agenda. However, the henna texts themselves do not communicate her whole message. It is her body, image, and persona, along with the **antecedent knowledge** of the histories and politics associated with her case, that make the meanings of her henna texts compelling. Thus, the distribution of a text, as seen in the henna art worn by Pori Moni, is largely dependent upon the production and ecology involved in the making of the artifact. Engaging with henna text, hence, is a multimodal literate activity, the scope of which goes beyond the flat meanings of decorative designs. Its meaning goes beyond what is seen and discussed in this article as well, as any art form can be taken up as a tool in various ways and manners, the limits of which are determined only by the limits of one's imagination.

Antecedent knowledge is "all the things a writer already knows that can come into play when a writer takes up any kind of writing" (ISU Writing Program).

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Notes

Using P-CHAT to Understand the Lives of Those with Type 1 Diabetes

Nenagh Gedge

Being a type 1 diabetic often means being misunderstood because people are unaware of the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes. In addition, people's lack of awareness about what it's like to live with type 1 diabetes can cause extra work and frustration for people with the disease. In this article, Nenagh Gedge uses P-CHAT terms like reception and socialization to explore how people interact with diabetics in ways that can make life more difficult, as well as how diabetics can construct their representations in ways that change how they are perceived.

What Do You Think About When You Hear the Word *Diabetes*?

I'm a type 1 diabetic. Most people I meet have heard of diabetes, but they usually aren't aware that there are different types of diabetes. If they know anything at all about the disease, they may only know about type 2 diabetes. For most folks, diabetes is something that anyone can get, especially if they aren't careful about their diet and lifestyle. But that misconception can be really hard for people with type 1 diabetes. In fact, the ways that people understand and react to diabetes (as a term, or how they understand how it impacts people who have it) can really make life difficult for those with diabetes. In this article, I will use pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory, or P-CHAT, to look at the ways that people treat diabetes as a genre of illness and how their misunderstandings can negatively impact the lives of people with this disease, making it harder for us to function and to feel comfortable or accepted in the world.

To start with, I want to remind readers that **P-CHAT** is a framework the ISU Writing Program uses that can help people to understand and

Literate Activity

"Developed by Paul Prior (1998, p. 138), the term 'literate activity' is meant to address all of the many ways that texts are part of people's lived experiences in the world. It extends beyond our typical ideas about 'reading' and 'writing' to include the broad range of practices and processes we employ in the creation and use of a wide array of texts" (Roozen 96).

analyze different kinds of literate activities that humans engage in. In this article, I guess you could say that I'm looking at *people with diabetes* as a **genre**—or as a kind of text that people read—and how these readings impact the way diabetics are seen in the world. People often attribute certain characteristics to their understanding of what a diabetic is, and I want to talk about these understandings as a kind of **literate activity** in which the P-CHAT concepts of reception and socialization both play a part.

According to the ISU Writing Program's website, **reception** "deals with how a text is taken up and used by others. Reception is not just who will read a text, but takes into account the ways people might use or repurpose a text (sometimes in ways the author may not have anticipated or intended)." So in the case of diabetics, reception specifically deals with how people with diabetes are seen and understood by others, how this understanding impacts our interactions, and even how we live with and manage our disease.

Welcome to My Life

I have been singled out as different ever since I was diagnosed with diabetes. I was seven when I was diagnosed. This was back in 2008. Common symptoms of diabetes are an increased need to use the bathroom and increased hunger and thirst. These symptoms are seen in both types of diabetes, but type 1 is usually diagnosed in younger people whereas type 2 is more often diagnosed in older individuals (although younger people can also get type 2). Type 1 and 2 diabetes are alike and different. Type 1 diabetes is when your pancreas completely stops working to produce insulin. Type 2 diabetes also involves the inability to produce insulin, but in addition, cells in your body aren't able to use insulin, so you end up with high levels of sugar in your blood ("Type 2 Diabetes"). The biggest misconception is that people think that only overweight people get type 2 diabetes. Though this is one reason why people may have type 2, not everyone with it is overweight. The pancreas is a pretty important organ in our bodies. It is used for digesting food and managing the use of sugar for energy after digestion. It enables sugar to enter your cells so that it can be used to create energy ("How Does the Pancreas Work?"). If we do not have insulin for a certain amount of time, we will go into diabetic ketoacidosis which can lead to death if not treated.

Before I was diagnosed, my Mom noticed that I wanted more snacks and that I was very thirsty all the time. Because she noticed all these changes, she decided to take me to urgent care. From there I underwent a range of different kinds of testing to get my diagnosis.

Now, multiple times a day, I must prick my finger, draw blood, and get my blood glucose. I also have to do this every time I eat or drink something with carbohydrates. If I do consume carbohydrates, I have to administer insulin into my body. Thankfully for me, I have an electronic pump that provides the insulin. But for those who are not lucky enough to have that advanced technology or even prefer to not have it, they must personally inject themselves with a needle. This, of course, draws attention when in public because many people do not understand what we are doing and why we are doing it. When you are young, people occasionally will talk to the parent instead of directly to the child. My Mother experienced this when we were out in public while I was growing up. My Mother was there the most for me growing up when it concerned my diabetes, and she was always there to educate anyone who asked. A couple of years ago my family went to go see Niagara Falls in New York. It was a very beautiful, sunny day. This was great except that the sun can be a bit much. In short, the sun and the amount of walking we did made my blood glucose go down. I needed sugar fast, so my grandmother skipped a line at a stand to get me something to drink. We got so many disgusted looks because my grandmother skipped the line. She tried explaining why I really needed something immediately. The workers were hesitant to give me anything and mentioned getting in line. A very kind stranger who happened to be a doctor came over and insisted that we were telling the truth and that this was an urgent matter. I think this is a great example of how we as diabetics struggle out in public. These people didn't know why it was so important that we got to skip the line.

In addition to being curious about the activities diabetics might need to engage in, a lot of people confuse the two types of diabetes, often only mentioning type 2. When a person who doesn't know about the types of diabetes or how they differ is talking to me about my disease, their ignorance can sometimes cause them to make inconsiderate comments. Their reception of the genre of people with diabetes is not researched, so they make mistakes, but it's more than that. In a paper I wrote a year ago, I said, "I get all these ignorant questions that can be offensive too." Questions I've been asked have included things like, "You have diabetes? But you are so small," or "Oh, is that the good one?" People have also asked, "Can you eat that?" and "Do you have it because you had too much sugar?" or "You don't look like you have it," as well as "Did you do something wrong?" If you did not even wince at one of those, then you should go read them again. And these are questions

The Problem with Reception

In the ISU Writing Program's concept of P-CHAT, the concept of **reception** is used to discuss how people take up and use texts that are produced by others (ISU Writing Program).

But reception in this case involves the way that humans understand and identify people with diabetes. It's been my experience that my own representations (of myself and of my disease) don't always match up with those of other people, and their reception of me (and my disease) can sometimes have negative consequences for me.

that I have heard frequently throughout my life. Like I said before, as I've gotten older and people are interacting more directly with me instead of with my parents, I now experience some of the insulting things that come out of their questions.

These people are *taking up* my identity as a person with diabetes, but because of their lack of knowledge and their insensitivity, their recognition of me is a *negative* recognition. I think it's important to talk about this because too often we see reception as a more neutral (or even positive) kind of activity. When this term is used in P-CHAT, it's often just described as the straightforward ways that people go about visualizing, understanding, and interacting with texts. In fact, the focus is often on the freedom and innovation that can occur when people take up a genre or tool and work with it, changing it or using it differently. But, in some cases, if people lack knowledge and experience or are insensitive, these uptakes could potentially be damaging to others.

Learning to Cope with Socialization as a Diabetic

In P-CHAT, the concept of **socialization** deals with "the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute, and use texts. When people engage with texts, they are also (consciously and unconsciously) engaged in the practice of representing and transforming different kinds of social and cultural practices" (ISU Writing Program). So for me, because I wasn't really encouraged or guided to talk about my disease—because I wasn't *socialized* as a person with type 1 diabetes in positive ways—I ended up feeling like the activities I had to engage in to control my diabetes were something I had to hide. I feel like this could be a reason I might not be the best at managing my health. When you feel like you have to hide what is considered different, you tend to forget that you have it. I tried to hide my diabetic supplies when going to test my blood sugar while I was in middle school. The things I try to hide nowadays also include the modern technology that I wear. One of the devices is a pump that carries insulin. I can put this wherever, but I tend to put it on my stomach the most so that it is out of sight and under clothes. The other device is used to check my blood glucose numbers without having to prick my fingers all day. This, as of right now, can only go on my arm. These things are out of the ordinary for most people because a lot of people are not socialized to them and don't see many others with them. When diabetics feel like we need to hide these tools for dealing with our disease, we may not take care of ourselves as we really should. I see the impact of this when I go to the doctor to see how I'm doing. When I go and my numbers are not where they should be, the doctor will tell me the reality of the situation. As someone who was diagnosed young, this has taken a toll on how I take care of myself. I will be honest in the fact that I do not take care of myself the way I should. When you are not responsible for yourself, your body will slowly start to shut down or you will start to see problems. For those with diabetes, this includes worsening of eyesight, problems with your limbs, and more. This is an example of how people's reception of diabetes impacts the socialization of how diabetics are perceived, which then influences the representations that diabetics may have of themselves.

But the socialization of a person with diabetes, even when it happens openly, is not always a good thing. As I have gotten older and people have become much more willing to talk to a teenager, harsher comments have come into play. The socialization of people with diabetes in terms of media, like advertising for products, isn't necessarily problematic. These images (print advertisements or commercials) are mostly just there to advertise products (like medications, testing supplies, etc.). So, our representation in these genres is just as another human with a little bit of a different life. I have never had any problems with representations of diabetes in this area. We (diabetics) thankfully have not been frowned upon in that particular world of writing. The area I am really aiming to talk about in this article is the more personal kinds of socialization—the ways that everyday people we interact with might talk to us or about us, including both labeling us as "different" and misunderstanding our condition and how we live with it. So as diabetics are socialized in these ways, the impact can be both harsh and hurtful. This can then impact the representations that diabetics have—about themselves, about strategies for managing or talking about their disease, or just about how they interact with people who do not have, or even know about, diabetes. When diabetics grow up hearing negative things about diabetes, it sticks with them. This can change how they act in public and how they treat their diabetes. Most people I am friends with who have diabetes tend not to take care of it as much as they should because of the embarrassment they feel about it. Some people think it's easier to avoid using tools like monitors or glucose pumps in order to avoid the awkward stares or comments we get when we take out our medical supplies.

The Impacts of the Negative Socialization of Diabetics

Examples of this kind of negative socialization can be found in the article, "Type 1 Diabetes in Young People: The Impact of Social Environments on Self-Management Issues from Young People's and Parents' Perspectives," by Beth Milton, Helen Cooper, and Joy Spencer. These authors studied teens in the UK with type 1 diabetes and found that there were a range of "barriers to self-management in school and social environments" (Milton et al. 48). Some teens reported problems at school, such as difficulty with teachers who did not want to allow them to leave the classroom to get food to treat episodes of hypoglycemia or who restricted where they could do injections (Milton et al. 53). Others discussed being called on to discuss their disease in class or struggles with motivation related to their glucose levels. Several of the teens and parents in the study discussed the struggle of not wanting to disclose their diabetes to friends, or where aspects of self-management caused them to feel unwanted attention (Milton et al. 54). In another study, published in 2006 by Judith W. Herrman, some children reported that dietary restrictions and "being treated differently" were two of the highest costs of living with the disease, as children claimed, "Everyone stares at me, I feel different." One child stated, "I don't like all the attention," and another related that, "we're not contagious . . . we can do the things other kids do" (Herrman 214). Both studies also found that positive support and acceptance (from family and friends and classmates) had a positive impact on teens' ability and willingness to adhere to "self-management regimens," while the perception of a negative response had the opposite impact: "Lack of peer support or young people's perceptions of negative peer reactions may partly explain reports of reduced adherence to the diabetes regimen during adolescence" (Milton et al. 56).

This research study illustrates my point about how type 1 diabetics can be impacted by the socialization of their disease. People with diabetes should not feel as if they are an alien because of their disease, and more importantly, a positive socialization can help people be more committed to managing their disease, which can improve their long-term health outcomes.

Another aspect of negative socialization for people with type 1 diabetes is that the prevalence of type 2 diabetes can cause misunderstandings and can even tend to make people with type 1 diabetes invisible—and this happens everywhere. For example, as I did research for this article, both looking at research articles and at people's comments and thoughts in various online spaces, I came across many, many examples related to type 2 diabetes. Often, when clicking on a link related to diabetes, I'd find that type 1 was mentioned somewhere in the article, but it was not as equally represented as information about type 2. In some ways, it seems as if type 1 diabetics don't exist in the social world. That is, in terms of information and representations, the socialization of diabetes and diabetics seems to be focused predominantly on type 2. I've learned that if I want information about type 1 diabetes, I must type it out in my search in that very specific way. The reason for this gap in information about the different types is most likely based on how common each of them is. When looking at the American Diabetes Association's website in the statistics section, I was able to get the numbers. "In 2019, 37.3 million Americans, or 11.3 percent of the population, had diabetes. Nearly 1.9 million Americans have type 1 diabetes, including about 244,000 children and adolescents" ("Statistics about Diabetes"). So only 1.9 million have type 1, which means that 35.4 million have type 2 diabetes. This huge gap in numbers is why it can be hard to find representations of type 1 diabetics and the issues that they face when searching online. This aspect (or lack) of socialization for type 1 diabetics made me sad to think about. The Internet is so big and full of information, but it seems, in some ways, to make me and people like me invisible.

Rethinking Diabetic Socializations

One of the things diabetics can do is speak and write more openly about not only their experience with the disease but also the activities they engage in to manage the disease on a daily basis. Often diabetics write about our stories because of the sad accusations and comments we get from people. We try to recognize the faults in society by writing. When we do this, we try to represent ourselves and our community in ways that are more accurate and complete and not misleading. Others (people without diabetes) need to know how to talk to and think about those with diabetes, rather than just saying something ignorant or unsupported without thought or consideration. These kinds of new representations can be used to impact the overall socialization of diabetics, just as similar kinds of work with other disabilities can change those socializations. Socialization is a key part of the change people with diabetes can impart by creating new representations through different kinds of literate activities.

Representing Diabetes as a Diabetic

Next, I'd like to talk a little about what diabetics can do to create new representations of diabetes and of themselves as diabetics. First, what we can do as a community of diabetics is speak out and educate. As I have gotten older, I have gotten sick of all the inaccurate information that people take as true about type 1 or 2 diabetes. I have listened to what people have said and then corrected them. I do not hate or judge people who don't have an accurate understanding of what diabetes is, but I am getting to the point where I want to be more active in helping to change these false conceptions. Another thing we diabetics should be doing is educating those who are close to us. Getting accurate information out into the world, even on a small scale, will help to give us one less person who will judge us.

One thing that is super important to our community is coming together for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), or any other kind of organization that supports diabetes. For example, I have done the JDRF One Walk multiple times and each time have put together a group of friends and family to walk with me and raise money for JDRF research. This is a great way to get out and meet people with the same disease. It is also a way to further educate people by spreading the word via the Internet. When diabetics come together as one big community, it shows that we are fighting both the disease and people's wrong perceptions of it, together.

Final Thoughts

I didn't realize how big and personal this topic would be until I really began thinking, researching, and writing about it. My diabetes has been with me most of my life, and the social aspect has never changed the way I feel it should. That is, in some ways it feels like nothing has changed when it comes to how people act around diabetics and their understanding of the disease and the work that goes into living with it. If anything, I have learned how underrepresented we are as a community within the larger socialization of diabetics in our culture.

This has made me realize how important it is for me to write about the way the disease affects my life and how I would like people's views to change. In the past I have written papers about diabetes and even had a website at one point (though it is not live anymore). I think that since social media is a part of our lives now, more people should share their life experiences with their audiences. I have posted multiple times about where there are differences between my life and others' lives. There are days that I would love to write a book about my life and what it takes to live the life of a type 1 diabetic, but that might have to wait for a while.

If you want to learn about diabetes, look it up. Make sure you are reading from sources that are credible though. You can also go to social media and find influencers that have diabetes. Then you can get a real look at what our daily lives can look like. There is also another article in the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* that you can read that is about diabetes. It is called "Beyond Type One" by Lisa Hanimov (issue 12.1, Fall 2021). If you read it, she tells her story from the beginning and how she lives with diabetes. Her article is a great look into how we live and think about our lives. For now, though, just remember that we are all human. Diabetics just need extra gadgets to keep us going.

If I can try to be a voice that type 1 diabetics and many other communities may need, then I will try my best to do so. I will make it a part of my journey to teach those who are not as educated about each type of diabetes. I would like to help in the task of changing how type 1 diabetics are socialized and understood in our culture because positive support can help people with diabetes live better and healthier lives.

To the Reader

Whether you or a loved one have experience with either form of diabetes or not, I hope you can take the information I shared with you into consideration. You do not need to make it your job to go out and teach people the things I have mentioned, but I do hope that if you hear someone share misleading information that you will politely correct them.

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Nenagh Gedge is a junior majoring in psychology at ISU. She has had diabetes since she was seven years old and is still fighting for a cure. She loves reading and doing fun projects like knitting. Telling a story like this is very important not only for her but also for those who do not have a voice.

Notes

Flossed in America: How Discourse Communities Participate in Literate Activity

Bethany Ebert

In this article, Bethany Ebert dissects and analyzes how a community built around floss picks actively participates in literate activity. Through the means of P-CHAT and multimedia texts, Ebert explores the complexity of writing in the world around them.

Have you ever taken a break from your phone to look around at the sidewalk while on a walk? The next time you do, you may be surprised to find a recurring piece of trash everywhere you go: the epitome of American convenience and on-the-go hygiene, the floss pick. You could be thinking to yourself that you have never encountered such litter, but would you believe me if I said there was a whole community that actively documents each floss pick they find?

The origin of the floss pick community is fuzzy; however, my understanding of it began with my Uncle Dan. The six-foot-three friendly giant travels the world as a pilot and dabbles in culinary arts on the side. His wife, Auntie Leigh, is a gifted and artistic individual. The two of them appreciate art in a way I haven't seen before. They were the perfect storm for the creation of this **discourse community**. What started as a coincidence turned into

Discourse Communities

In her discussion of "sociocultural activities" that different types of groups participate in, Julie Hengst says, "Cultures and communities organize interactions about a wide variety of highly recognizable and easily named activities . . . [which can have] long histories, broadly understood goals, and recognizable social roles and patterns of participation."

Figure 1: Floss found in Crystal Lake, IL by Dan Ebert (@TossedFloss).

a gallery of stories depicting what would otherwise be deemed meaningless trash. The ISU Writing Program defines a discourse community as "a grouping of people who share certain language using norms and practices." My aunt and uncle had noticed the trend of floss picks on the ground and began sharing their findings with others, documenting each floss pick they found with a photo. An example of these findings can be seen in Figure 1, as well as in the other images I've scattered, like forgotten floss picks, throughout this article. This eventually led to the creation of the Flossed in America Twitter profile, which is known on Twitter as @TossedFloss. Conveniently, the name doubles as a username for the social media profile and the name for its discourse community. Below is the origin story in my uncle's own words via a phone interview.

Interview with Uncle Dan

Bethany: What caused you to start the Twitter account?

Uncle Dan: It started with your Auntie Leigh. She was the first one to mention to me that she was seeing floss picks everywhere. After she brought it to my attention, I started to see them a lot too. Shortly thereafter, it started coming up in conversations, like with your parents and others. "Hey, have you ever noticed . . . ?" Pretty soon we started taking and sharing pictures of them whenever we saw one. After a few weeks of that, we were sharing pictures so frequently that a Twitter account seemed like a logical way to share pictures with everyone who was already in on the joke and to see if there were others out there noticing all of the tossed floss. The hashtag "flossed in America" was a play on words based on one of your aunt's favorite movies called *Lost in America*.

Bethany: What was your initial goal for the account?

Uncle Dan: The initial goal was just to facilitate and consolidate the ongoing inside joke between family members and a few friends.

Bethany: Does it have any deeper meaning relating to the environment?

Uncle Dan: I wish I could say with a straight face that there was some more noble cause behind the account, but in reality, it just started as a joke. If it happens to raise any kind of environmental awareness in the people who see it, that's just a happy accident.

Bethany: What are your goals for the account in the future, or if you develop a bigger following?

Uncle Dan: Again, it'd be great if I could tell you I had any serious goals, but right now I'm just happy to make a few people laugh. If by some miracle it were to explode into a much larger following, then maybe I'd reevaluate things and decide if I would want to make it into something more meaningful. That's the beauty of a large gathering: everyone can interpret it as they want.

The Tossed Floss Community

The setting for this specific discourse community is on the social media platform Twitter. It is here where people are able to post their discoveries along with the location for the rest of the community to see. This kind of social media allows for easy reception, as well as the socialization of the practice and widespread, ongoing participation. The ISU Writing Program defines **socialization** as the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute, and use texts; in this case, the interactions involve taking photos and documenting locations and then sharing them through different social media platforms (as well as additional goals, which developed over time). Socialization is a subunit of a set of terms called **pedagogical cultural-historical activity theory**, or **P-CHAT**, which the ISU Writing Program uses to explore how writing happens in many different forms, or genres, in our everyday lives. You could be thinking to yourself that the practices of Tossed Floss cannot be considered a literate activity, but it is important to think of these small interactions in the bigger picture by using P-CHAT. With every photo taken, the context tells a story beyond just floss. Literate activity is not limited to sentences on a page, rather it expands to include anything that has to do with engaging in and sharing ideas, knowledge, and experiences. We will dive more into Tossed Floss in relation to

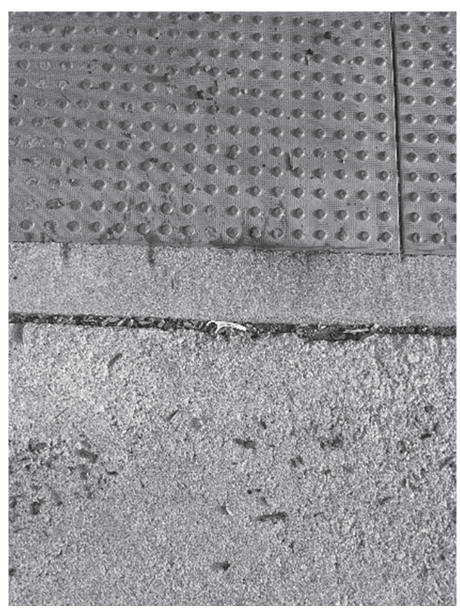

Figure 2: Floss found in Elgin, IL by Sarah Cossiboon (@sallysunshine17).

Figure 3: Floss found in Vernon Hills, IL by Dave Ebert (@debert26).

P-CHAT later, but for now, I would like to focus on its specific discourse community and how socialization is at play for the development of the profile. The socialization and re-creation methods are the foundation for this community to thrive and grow. When people have been introduced to the idea of commonly discarded floss picks, they will be more inclined to look for them. Once they do find them, the participation process is easy enough to motivate people to post and further socialize with the movement. The key activity that marks someone joining this community would be for a person to snap a photo of the floss pick, add a location to the photo, and perhaps make further comments. This is the primary activity through which the discourse community continues to grow. This idea is not specific to the Tossed Floss community; it can be applied to any group of people who share similar ideas and participate in common practices.

Sister Communities

The Tossed Floss discourse community has many other different "sister communities" as well. The concept of sister communities is kind of abstract. It describes a discourse community that is similar to another but with different participants or comparable values and shared ideas. For example, my uncle's discourse community is the one I and many of my other family members are a part of, but there are other communities of people discussing floss picks on different platforms. Uncle Dan's community is specific to Twitter, which is not to say there aren't other sister communities on that platform too, but I have yet to discover them. As I researched my uncle's site, I also came across other individuals sharing similar ideas and concerns about the floss picks, one of which was on Reddit. Reddit is an online website that is a collection of conversations, or forums, in which people can share ideas, news, commentary, or questions. It is a breeding ground for small discourse communities. You can join a group, or "subreddit," of like-minded individuals to discuss topics of interest. This is what makes a discourse community. It is also a good example of **multimedia composing**. This term is defined by the ISU Writing Program as all the different media—tools, methods, and spaces—

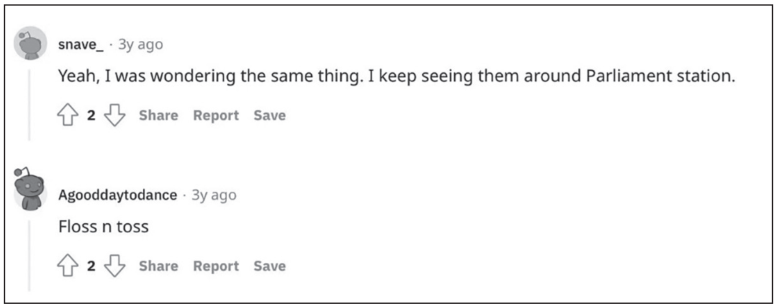

Figure 4: Other users in the community are agreeing with the original post made about seeing an abundance of floss picks (@CanuckAussieKev).

that writers can use when they are composing. Flossed in America cannot only be shared via Twitter; it can also be distributed through other means of social media like Reddit and Instagram. The more multimedia composing that is done, the more the text can be distributed and influence others.

The discourse community I found on Reddit was started by a random user asking a simple question: "Why are there always dental floss picks on the ground?" (@CanuckAussieKev). This formulated a response from others who had also noticed the phenomenon (Figure 4). "I was wondering the same thing," (@snave_) and "It's the new ciggy butt" (@duccy_duc) were just a few of the reactions in the comments. This second comment hints at the fact that the floss pick is the new cigarette butt, yet another sister community of Tossed Floss. My Dad explained to me that before the floss pick, he had noticed, and even still does notice, cigarette butts littered everywhere. We may even be on the brink of the creation of a new discourse community: lost and forgotten masks due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. But that's not all. Many blog posts and articles discuss their own commonly noticed trash like dog waste bags, rubber bands, and plastic water bottles. These can all be examples of sister communities under the greater discourse community of recurring and persistent trash in our world that gets noticed daily.

Figure 5: Floss found in Huntley, IL by Chris Calato (@syliach).

Floss 'n' P-CHAT

At this point, we are all thinking about how in the world finding dental picks has anything to do with literate activity. As I said before, P-CHAT can help us more deeply understand how elements in the world around us relate back to writing. By using P-CHAT, we can dissect the many moving parts of the Flossed in America community and understand how it actively participates in literary elements. To start, we need to distinguish the key terms in P-CHAT: production, representation, distribution, reception, socialization, activity, and ecology. Each aspect analyzes the elements of textual production and how people interact with different kinds of media. Tossed Floss uses images, social media, and short personalized descriptions to create a unique type of literate activity that tells a story and relates back to its discourse community.

Production

Production refers to how a text is produced and carried out (ISU Writing Program). It is important to focus on the tools with which the product is composed. In this case, I will be specifically focusing on the Flossed in America Twitter page and the requirements needed to run the account and participate. It begins with a discarded floss pick. Without this crucial element, the discourse community and its platform would not be possible. Other essential tools would be a phone and access to the Internet. These are needed to run the account as well as follow the page on Twitter. It is also necessary to acquire a camera. This allows for the capturing of photos of the floss picks found. This is key for participation because it is how the documentation process begins. By looking at Tossed Floss through the lens of production, we can see how simple the process is to participate in. This is what allows the discourse community to grow so easily.

Representation

Representation refers to how people conceptualize and plan out the process of creating and writing, or in this case posting, a text (ISU Writing Program). This element of P-CHAT allows us to understand the person producing the material better because we can gain insight into why they did what they did. For example, my Uncle Dan created this page with the purpose to inspire people to post and contribute to the Flossed in America page. His specific choice to use the social media platform Twitter makes it easy for his audience to engage, which further supports his original purpose. The participation methods used are also fairly easy, which makes people more inclined to submit their photos and tell their stories. It is also important to keep in mind that all photo submissions depend on whether someone discovers a lost floss pick in the first place. This could affect whether or not someone is even given an opportunity to engage in the discourse community. It is key to understand the aspects of what goes into the making of a text in order to have a complete and deep understanding of the final product.

Distribution

Distribution refers to the process of texts reaching their audience (ISU Writing Program). It stresses the importance of where the product goes and how it gets there. Specifically thinking about Flossed in America, we know it is on the platform Twitter. This is key to understanding distribution because we know the viral nature of the content of this platform. The trending page is accessible to everyone on Twitter and allows people to follow and find new topics or accounts. Not to mention, the #TossedFloss or #FlossedinAmerica hashtags can link all posts related to the discourse community together and make them easily discoverable to the other users on Twitter. Commenting, quote tweeting, and retweeting are all mechanisms that allow people to interact with each post. Given the goal of the discourse community is to become mainstream, I think the use of Twitter was a smart move towards being discovered and for cultivating a community.

Reception

Reception involves how an audience interprets and interacts with the text (ISU Writing Program), or photos in our case. Physically, this can be seen through "likes" and comments, but it also refers to how people comprehend and perceive each photo. Although it is an abstract idea, each photo holds a story or memory behind it. Oftentimes, family members and other participants will insert their own inside jokes or personal verbiage in the caption to make each post unique to them. From my high school graduation to my sister's move-in day at college, each has been documented in a photo that tells a story beyond floss. Not to mention the various locations that all hold some sort of meaning to that user. When people read and interpret the details within each image, they are actively engaging in reception.

Socialization

The term **socialization** stands for how people interact with each other through and with texts (ISU Writing Program). As I have said before, socialization is the foundation for the Flossed in America discourse community. Any growth of the community is thanks to socialization and re-creation. Relating Tossed Floss back to the production lens of P-CHAT, we know the process of contributing is fairly easy. When people stumble across the Twitter page, they will be more inclined to pay attention to lost floss and eventually contribute their own photo. Their photos provide a personal insight of their own life into the overall gallery of stories. Socialization is at play here because every post generates conversation between the other users. I personally love to poke fun at my Dad's posts and his choice of editing by leaving comments. These interactions help to create a sense of community or culture over time. Whether it be a dramatic blur or intense filter, he does his best to catch everyone's eye with his posts. He, on the other hand, likes to comment on my posts to remind me to add a location and hashtag to my tweet. The location, caption, and photo itself are all elements that are up for discussion, and Twitter makes it especially easy and convenient. This is key in any growing discourse community and especially beneficial for Uncle Dan's Twitter account. The discourse community itself was founded on the conversation of always seeing floss picks lying around, like we see in the Reddit thread.

Activity

When thinking about **activity**, this refers to the actions and behaviors that go into creating texts (ISU Writing Program). This can be seen on the Tossed Floss Twitter page as finding a floss pick, taking a photo, uploading it to Twitter, and contributing to the gallery. Although this term is simple, as it just analyzes the steps taken, it helps us to better understand the process so it can be recreated.

Ecology

Ecology, on the other hand, deals with the environmental factors that influence our writing (ISU Writing Program). Whether it be positive or negative, the environment has an effect on us in numerous ways, which can all be translated into our writing. This lens of P-CHAT specifically applies to Tossed Floss because as we know, the location of the photos can hold value to the story of the image. This comes into play with Uncle Dan, especially since he is a pilot. With every new state or country he travels to, his floss pictures reflect the specific trip he took. It is also important to note the time period in which each photo is taken. This has been especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since fewer people are going out, there may be a trend of fewer floss picks being found. It is also interesting to think about the flip side of that argument. Floss picks may be on the decline, but the creation of new kinds of discarded items is underway. More and more people may begin to notice masks being littered everywhere, thus creating perfect conditions for a new discourse community. Ecology impacts how the community evolves, changing the gallery of stories to make it more diverse in locations and meaning.

Signs of the Times

So, what does it mean to participate in literate activity? Traditionally, we limit ourselves to seeing writing and literature as textbooks and essays. However, with further analysis, those are only small genres of writing that make up the bigger picture. Literate activity is everywhere because stories can be found within everything. Whether it be through emojis, social media captions, podcasts, art pieces, or images, everything holds meaning. It boils down to whether we choose to observe these things from an analytical perspective or not.

The story of Flossed in America is one that I have actively participated in since the beginning, but it wasn't until the introduction of P-CHAT that I realized there was more to each floss pick. Each image, caption, and location provided small, intimate stories of each community member's everyday life. To understand these meanings, we dissect the process of creating each photo, or story, using P-CHAT. This discourse community is a good example of how literate activity is present in almost everything and how everyone can participate in it. So, the next time you see a floss pick on the ground, consider how you can tell its story and engage with the community it supports.

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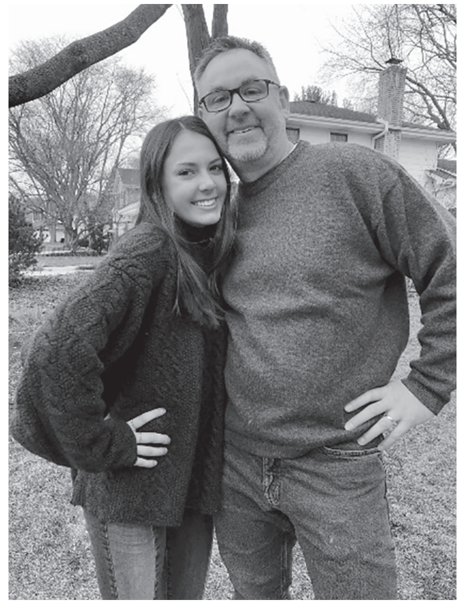

Notes

The Remediation of True Crime and Its Role in Romanticizing Killers

Kaylee DeBoe

In this article, Kaylee DeBoe discusses the remediation of true crime content. She does so by tracing true crime events from spoken forms of communication to books, movies, and online spaces. By exploring the ways in which different representations of true crime events may lead to the romanticization of serial killers and evaluating the influence of different discourse communities that revolve around true crime, DeBoe suggests that ethical remediation is necessary to deter individuals from romanticizing those who commit gruesome crimes.

A few years ago, I watched *Criminal Minds* in its entirety for the first time. I was hooked on the repetitive yet varied arc of every episode, which typically went a little something like this: (1) Bad Guy does something bad, (2) the main cast of characters analyze the Bad Guy and the bad thing they have done, and (3) the characters find the Bad Guy in the nick of time and stop them. My fascination with these fictional Bad Guys and their psychology led to an eventual interest in true crime, particularly serial killer cases. My desire to learn more about these killers and their horrific crimes compelled me to search the Internet for additional information. However, as I explored the Internet, I was met with a troubling realization that there were entire online subcultures dedicated to romanticizing and admiring killers. Within these subcultures, participants express adoration for conventionally attractive, typically white, male killers, as if the physical attributes of those men overshadowed their crimes (which is a different discussion for a different article altogether). Anyway, learning this made me wonder how someone could consume media related to a serial killer and come away from it with a positive perception of the individual, while overlooking the actual crimes.

I don't presume to understand the psychological roots of romanticization or precisely what causes the shift from fascination to admiration of a killer. I do, however, think that some of the terms we use to discuss literate activity can be applied to this conversation in a way that might help me trace some of the practices that afford this kind of romanticization. In this article, I plan to explore the purpose of remediating history, in this case true crime, as well as the responsibility to do so in a way that is ethical and accurate. To unpack this point, I will use the concept of antecedent knowledge and discuss how audiences receive and interact with content related to true crime to explain how someone might begin to sympathize with or even admire serial killers.

What Is Romanticization?

As content depicting serial killers constantly multiplies, facts of heinous crimes can become muddled and overshadowed by narratives about their personal lives. Due to this proliferation of true crime material, audiences have had more and more opportunities to form their own opinions and "relationships," so to speak, with killers. Especially in the case of texts that center the humanness of killers and sideline their crimes, audiences might be more likely to sympathize with or extend understanding to them. This is, in my opinion, a problem because the victims are no longer the ones receiving sympathy. Furthermore, this perspective can lend itself to sensationalizing or, worse still, romanticizing killers. *Merriam-Webster's* dictionary defines the word *romanticize* as "to make romantic: treat as idealized or heroic" ("Romanticize"). For my purposes, I am going to specifically consider the word *romanticize* as it applies to serial killers and the process of creating a false narrative about individuals despite the reality of their crimes. This connects to the *Merriam-Webster* definition in the sense that, through these false narratives, killers are idealized and reimagined as misunderstood figures. Through romanticizing killers, individuals are able to justify their attraction to, identification with, and admiration for them because they can ignore or downplay their crimes.

Remediating True Crime

Genre remediation is a concept that involves moving content or material from one genre and putting it into a different genre, which of course can involve both changes in content and also changes in perspective about that content. For the purpose of this article, I'll be using the term *genre remediation* somewhat broadly. If we look at the historical event or person—in this instance, a true crime case or a serial killer—as the original, then the various retellings that surround the case or the killer could be considered remediations. These retellings might involve oral remediations (verbal retellings) but could also involve a range of other genres and modalities, such as police reports, news stories, court documents, and so on. So, remediations might occur in spoken discussions that take place immediately after a crime is committed, prior to recording the event in a text, but might also be further remediated into, perhaps, a newspaper article, which might then be remediated into more extensive newspaper articles as crimes start to multiply and connect. Eventually, if the crime/killer becomes "popular" enough (even though I'm really not a fan of that verbiage, I'm not sure how else to articulate it), the narrative of events could be remediated into a documentary, book, podcast, or something else on a larger scale at some point down the line.

The very act of recording and remediating an historic event in any capacity is certainly a complex one for many reasons. Who decides which version of a true crime case is the truest? How do we decide what the "true" or "objective" narrative is, and how do we define ethical remediation of real events if there is no pure truth about an event or person (or at least not a pure truth that we can definitively recognize as such)? While it is certainly valuable to document the atrocities committed by serial killers, there appears to be an ever-present double-edged sword involved, especially as texts continue to proliferate. It's possible for even the most accurate remediations to contribute to romanticization by sensationalizing or fictionalizing real people who have committed actual crimes. As the narratives of events are taken up and remediated over and over again, the facts tend to shift, and the initial purpose of recording these killers and their crimes can be lost. It's sort of like one giant game of telephone in which everyone forgets that the original story is based on real people as it is passed down the line. Oftentimes, the names of victims go unspoken, while the names of killers are well known. At a certain point, killers can become mythologized in a way that is dangerous because they begin to appear as fictional characters who have committed fictional crimes with fictional victims (which can be easier to deal with than actual crimes). However, there is also something to be said for responsibly recording true crime and serial killers in texts. These texts tend to be geared toward offering cautionary tales and striving to remember victims. I suppose a large component of how remediations of true crime might be taken up by audiences has to do with the intention of the remediation and whether facts are intentionally skewed or softened for entertainment value as these remediations take place.

The act of remediating texts that depict historical events and people is unique in the sense that inaccuracies introduced during the remediation or revision process are unethical and disseminate misinformation. When a director makes decisions in the case of a fictional film adaptation of an original book, it may frustrate fans if the film strays from the initial text. Even so, there are generally no long-standing, dangerous repercussions. In contrast, misrepresenting a serial killer in a documentary can have legitimate consequences that impact the way audiences think about that figure and their heinous actions. This is obvious in the context of documenting history on a broader scale because these narratives can depict only one version of the truth, perpetuating a narrative that fits their own worldview, which has tangible consequences. Just as consequences follow the choices creators (authors, historians, documentary filmmakers) make when they document history, the remediation of true crime texts comes with concrete consequences as well. The text will always have some kind of impact, whether the person creating the text is aware of this or not. Therefore, it can be understood that those remediating true crime have a degree of responsibility to consider the ways their texts might be taken up by an audience. A text that paints the killer as sympathetic and focuses upon their personal life at the expense of adequately depicting their crimes is an irresponsible and ethically unsound text.

Uptake and Antecedent Knowledge

In regard to true crime, a person's uptake of the available information about a particular case can rely pretty heavily on their antecedent knowledge about the topic. According to the ISU Writing Program, **uptake** refers to the process of thinking about, learning, and integrating new concepts. Uptake is informed by, among other things, our antecedent knowledge when we encounter a new idea. **Antecedent knowledge** (another ISU Writing Program term) is used to describe information a person already knows, which they are using in a situation in which they're dealing with new information. For example, if a person has engaged with a text that paints Ted Bundy in a sympathetic light, they may have a more empathetic stance toward him, even if they subsequently engage with a text that is less sympathetic. I've noticed that some recent depictions of serial killers—particularly films and docudramas such as *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* and *My Friend Dahmer*—downplay their crimes and the impact upon victims as well as victims' families, while focusing more heavily upon their interpersonal relationships and the lives of killers prior to or "outside" of their crimes (if it is possible to draw a distinction between the crimes and the other aspects of their lives in the first place). For viewers who might learn about the crime through these productions, the facts of the crime are potentially displaced by these more sympathetic treatments. Ultimately, this might make them less able to consider the factual elements of the crime. The construction of their antecedent knowledge shapes their uptake of new information, potentially leading them to focus more on the killer's humanity as opposed to the victims. The problem is that creators of sympathetic true crime texts have no way of knowing whether their audiences have the antecedent knowledge necessary to negotiate the sympathy they are made to feel for particular killers without beginning to romanticize them.

Fictionalizing True Crime

Here, I'd like to revisit my previously mentioned love for *Criminal Minds*, which drew me toward my interest in true crime. Since *Criminal Minds* is a fictional television show, it can create narratives that deal with the same general concepts and cases discussed in true crime texts without the need to be accurate about details or concerned with the lives of actual individuals impacted by the crimes. However, many of the episodes are based upon true crime cases. A quick Google search will pull up numerous lists from various online news sources titled something akin to "The [insert number] *Criminal Minds* Episodes Based on Real Crimes." Since so many of these episodes are fictional interpretations of true crime cases, they are also a sort of remediation. This brings us back to the discussion of ethical remediation. Is there an ethical way to remediate true crime into a fictional context without undermining the severe and lasting effects of the real case? Let's say, for the sake of argument, that at least when it comes to disrespecting the victims, it is *not* inherently unethical or irresponsible to remediate real killers and crimes into fiction. Do these sorts of remediations become unethical when we consider the component of their uptake and whether these versions of the narratives might lead viewers to fictionalize true crime cases in the future? I don't know that I have an answer to these questions, but it's just something to think about. Obviously, I'm a fan of the show, so I don't think it's necessarily problematic, but there are certainly unethical aspects, especially when it portrays characters who are essentially real killers with fake names in a fictionalized setting.

I can only assume that there are a large number of people, such as myself, who have found an interest in true crime by way of the Fictional Crime Show to True Crime Pipeline. If our brains are used to consuming media which depict gruesome crimes without being asked to consider the real-world events that lie beneath these stories, our antecedent knowledge could sort of predispose us to fictionalize killers, even ones that have really killed people. This is especially easy to do when many of the story lines presented in fictional crime shows borrow elements from (or sometimes recreate) real cases. So, when we switch gears and become consumers of texts that convey actual killers with real victims, it is imperative that we consciously reframe the information we take up as real with legitimate consequences instead of trying to frame it within our prior knowledge of fictional killers. Neglecting to make this shift could create a breeding ground for romanticizing killers because it is easier to downplay the pain they've inflicted. Perhaps consumers whose interests span fictionalized crime and true crime sources have an ethical obligation to take care in differentiating the two kinds of genres.

At this point, I want to move from commercial remediations of true crime (books, movies, television) to more everyday genres where the issue of fictionalization is also a problem, namely, social media posts. As I stated at the beginning of the article, I was first introduced to the concept of serial killer romanticization while browsing the Internet for information on serial killers. Tumblr is one of the social media platforms that seems to house a large number of users who vocally romanticize and admire killers. This is another site of true crime remediation and fictionalization. On Tumblr, the True Crime Community (TCC) includes blogs and users dedicated to true crime on a wide scope, including but not limited to serial killers, mass shooters, and arsonists. Tumblr users in the TCC are generally split between two camps. The first is comprised of people with a genuine interest in discussing, investigating, and posting about true crime. Some TCC blogs are geared toward educating and informing others to some degree, but this is also typically done pretty informally, given the platform. This portion of the TCC on Tumblr engages with and remediates texts regarding serial killers in a way that is arguably relatively ethical and presents facts relating to real-world crimes. This form of remediation could be considered at least somewhat valuable in that it makes the information more accessible to more people. However, a second group within the TCC on Tumblr is comprised of people who skew factual elements of criminal cases in an effort to prove the innocence of massively well-known killers, romanticizing them and reimagining events of their crimes—editing hearts and flower crowns onto mass shooters. These remediations of killers are unpleasant and arguably unethical. These users engage in activities of remediation in a way that is toxic and dangerous. And, again, because Tumblr is such an accessible platform, these accounts centering around romanticizing killers are always multiplying and continuing to further remediate and revise the real events and killers in true crime cases. There are numerous examples of content falling within either of these categories on the Internet, but I've chosen not to include any images or examples from either kind of blog here so as to avoid making anyone uncomfortable while reading this article.

While the TCC in general may seem to be one large community of users, I'd argue that because the two groups within it use varying language and have extremely different approaches to and motivations for their interests in true crime, they should be categorized as different, even though the label of True Crime Community creates a sense of overlap. Those who romanticize killers might use some of the same terminology as those who are focused on analyzing factual elements of the cases, but their "goals" are entirely separate. The community that focuses on learning and writing about true crime events for the sake of education or due to personal interest engages in very different kinds of activity and writing than the community that focuses on romanticizing killers. This second community does not present factual information, or they present factual information in a way that is skewed toward presenting the killers in a sympathetic light. In fact, these two communities typically have such disparate perspectives on true crime that they often argue with one another and engage in conflicts over whether it is ethically sound to romanticize killers and claim to be in love with them (spoiler alert: it's not). I've even noticed that some of the fact-based blogs that are interested in the crimes themselves choose not to tag themselves as TCC to avoid being connected with those who romanticize killers.

Reception

In the ISU Writing Program's version of P-CHAT, the term **reception** refers to the way audiences take up a text once it has been distributed. In addition, reception also deals with the different ways individuals might use a text once they've taken it up, including uses that the creator of the text had not anticipated. This particular phenomenon is illustrated by the use of clips from *My Friend Dahmer*, a dramatization that depicts the childhood of Jeffrey Dahmer leading up to his initial murder, and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*, a docudrama that portrays the personal life of Ted Bundy. Clips from both of these films are sometimes taken out of context and used as GIFs by individuals on Tumblr. Because both of the actors who portray Dahmer and Bundy in these respective films are conventionally attractive men, the GIFs are often tied to some caption equivalent to "Wow, this man is so dreamy. I love him (and he's a dreamboat) so he must be innocent," or "If [insert any killer's name here] knew me, I could've saved him from his desire to kill by showing him true love," or any multitude of other absurd, insensitive captions. I'll go out on a limb and make the assumption that the creators of these films did not intend for clips to circulate in communities that romanticize serial killers. However, once they release the text, certain receptions and future remediations are, in some cases, not under their control.

Conclusion

I hope it's clear that with this article, I don't mean to suggest that all remediations of true crime are inevitably going to have some negative impact or perpetuate the romanticization of serial killers. My aim, instead, is to bring attention to the ways that some remediations are not doing the work they could (and, in my opinion, should) be doing to frame killers as killers, instead of Misunderstood Loner Bad Boys. While the documentation of history, including true crime, is important and inevitable, more attention should be paid to the implications of different choices made during the remediation process. Therefore, it is the responsibility of those remediating true crime and serial killer cases to represent events accurately instead of relying on the antecedent knowledge of audiences to do the work for them. However, I also think it is important to think about our own antecedent knowledge when we approach true crime content. In a landscape of content that is constantly becoming more saturated with books, movies, podcasts, and any other form of media about true crime, particularly serial killers, we as consumers need to approach these texts critically. Are we regarding true crime as entertainment and divorcing it from its basis in reality? If so, how does this impact our ability to maintain a grasp on the knowledge that these are very real atrocities committed by actual killers?

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Notes

in which people read me
no eye contact lol
"soft" AFAB features
queer?
Ma'am
interested
Sir
??
creative
glasses
neuroqueer RBF
???
bleached hair (did by myself)
punk
undercut (did by myself)
not interested
messy curly hair
pierced ears
nose ring
tired
some old shirt from goodwill
gay
like, 6 facial hairs (from hormone replacement therapy)
goblin-esque posture/hunching
special
trans
girly boy
boyish girl
autistic
weird

Manic Panic: When You're Not a "Natural" Rainbowhead

Alicia Shupe

In this article, Alicia Shupe explores the importance of genre analysis and convention, and using critical thinking in concert with antecedent knowledge to read people much as we might read a text.

Do You Read Me? People as Genre

Have you ever sat at a restaurant or café table near a window and watched the people on the street walk by? If you have, you know that, in general, you'll see all kinds of people with all kinds of diverse stories and backgrounds moving through all sorts of tasks important to their daily lives. One might be on the way to work, another on the way home; someone is running a shopping errand, another has just picked up their school-age children. As you watch them coming and going, it's likely that you've formed ideas of what their lives might look like. But where do those ideas come from? How do you know that the man crossing the street in the nicely fitted suit talking on his cell phone is a business professional? What do you believe about the young woman riding the bicycle and wearing the brightly colored tie-dye dress? You may not be aware of it, but as you're watching these people go about their lives, you're actually *reading* them. Their clothes, their hair, their posture, their actions—all work together to create a story of who this person is and what their business in the world may be. In other words, their external presentation acts as a genre convention that tells you who they are.

The ISU Writing Program defines **genre conventions** as "all the things a writer could discover (and discuss) about a particular genre that makes us recognize it as, well, what it is." That is to say, genre conventions tell you how to understand something as belonging to a certain genre.

You may have guessed the man was in business because of this expensive-looking, well-fitting suit, which suggests he is someone who wears a suit often and needs to maintain a certain appearance. You may have also guessed at his profession because he was talking on a cell phone and carrying a briefcase. You may assume that the young woman on the bicycle is a "free spirit" because of the tie-dye dress or her seemingly carefree smile. Some of these assumptions may be completely accurate. Some may not. Unlike reading a text and applying genre conventions to understand the work the writing is doing, reading a person as a genre can be a bit more complicated.

Genre Conventions: Who Are You and How Do You Look?

The ISU Writing Program defines **genre** as "a kind of production that it is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make that production recognizable." Whoa! That's kind of a lot. If genre is a kind of production, then how can it apply to people? Well, that's actually a simpler answer than you might think. Have you ever heard the terms "product of society" or "a product of their environment"? What those sayings are hinting at is the fact that people are shaped by the places where they grow up and the people they interact with. Each society has its own set of rules and cultural values. As we grow and become active participants in the world, we internalize those values and then learn to behave in a way that fits with those learned conventions. Here's an example to help it make a little more sense: as a child, you may have been taught to say "sir" or "ma'am" when you're speaking to someone older than yourself. You may have also been taught to wear certain "fancy" clothes if you attended church or Sunday school. Why? Because wearing "fancy" clothes to church is supposed to show respect. In my house, my Mother's answer to "Why can't I wear my soccer shirt to church?" was "Because I didn't raise a hooligan." At eight years old, I didn't particularly have a definition for "hooligan," but I could understand that it was important to my Mom that I looked clean and well put together: a decent reflection of her parenting. She didn't want the other church folks to think she hadn't taught me to be respectful. My Mother knew that other adults would look at me and read me as either well behaved and well taught or "wild" based on my appearance. Just as a reader and a writer might do when trying to figure out which genre a book, song, or movie is, they would look at the final product—me as a child—and assign me a genre based on the conventions I exhibited. Unkempt hair, soccer shirt, and excitable behavior would equal a "wild" classification, whereas "fancy" dress, clean socks, and smooth hair (impossible with my natural curls) would earn me a classification as one of the "good" kids.

As I've shown with the example of watching people come and go on the street, this type of people-reading is not singular to church folks and children. We all do this constantly. It's how we understand whether we want to engage with someone before we ever say "hello" for the first time. Reading people as a genre gives us some insight into who that person may be, whether we share values, whether we might get along, and whether we want to invite them into our world. But is reading people as a genre always benign? We'd like to think so, but the truth is, people, like texts, do not exist in a vacuum. Our genre conventions can be pushed and even broken. Think of Lil Nas X recording "Old Town Road" with Billy Ray Cyrus: Is it rap? Is it country? Is it pop? Is it something new and something else altogether? The same is true of people. Just because someone wears a suit doesn't mean they fit neatly into the box of "conservative business professional," and just because someone has dyed their hair blue doesn't mean they fit neatly into the "anarchist punk" box. Our value systems that allow us to apply genre conventions to people and read them as belonging to a certain group were shaped by the worlds in which we grew up, which means there is plenty of room for stereotypes, discrimination, and misinformation. There are myriad ways to misread someone based on appearance, and those misreads can have very real consequences for the life of the person who is misread and misjudged on first look.

Did God Give You Blue Hair? The Limits of Antecedent Knowledge

When I was twenty years old, I dyed my hair "Electric Blue." The logic for this change was quite simple in my mind: After two decades as the daughter of a pastor, constantly concerned with how other people would read my appearance and categorize me based on the conventions of the genre to which they decided I belonged, I'd decided I wanted my external appearance to match the person I knew on the inside—someone who was beginning to realize she didn't care all that much about fitting specific genre conventions and who wanted a little room to figure out which bookshelf she belonged on all by herself. Also, blue just happened to be my favorite color

Reading is a term often used in Black Queer culture, particularly in the Trans, Drag, and Ballroom communities. The term is typically applied when one points out and "exaggerates" the flaws of another (@robby-pooh).

While the context was different for me, there is some overlap between this term and what happened in the following story.

It is also worth noting that reading people as a genre, when considered in this cultural context, has a traceable history that should not be ignored. The subculture that popularized the term is often marginalized and disadvantaged in mainstream education, literacy, and reading opportunities (texts).

at the time, and I thought it was pretty, so . . . there was that. I grew up in the '90s and was a teenager in the early aughts, so I'd seen brightly colored dyed hair in pop culture for most of my life, but having also grown up in an incredibly conservative church, I didn't know anything about the history of dyed hair or about the history of "reading" people in Black Queer culture. I didn't know anything about punk subculture. And I was definitely not prepared for how the rest of the world would read my new genre. I knew how the church would respond, but since I'd broken from that religion, I wasn't concerned. Naively, I thought the rest of the world wouldn't care what I did or how I looked.

In the summer of 2010, my sister took me and a friend to see Bon Jovi at Soldier Field in Chicago (see Figure 1 at the end of this article for a full-color image). As we walked through the tunnel to the field, we passed several security checkpoints where we showed our tickets, opened our bags, and were waved through. At the last checkpoint, my sister and her friend, a blonde and a brunette, were waved through, but the security guard who checked my ticket asked me to wait. I stood for what seemed like a lifetime—it was probably no more than ninety seconds—before she finally sighed and said, "Blue hair? Did God give you blue hair? Do you believe that God is imperfect in his knowledge and made a mistake when he gave you your natural hair? You think you can improve on God's design with blue hair?" I was stunned. First, because this security guard sounded like she'd spent some time talking to my Father. But, then, even more so because I couldn't understand how the strands growing from my head had anything to do with her or any relationship to whether or not it was safe for me to take my seat (which I paid for) on the field at a rock concert. Of all the places I might have expected to be read as "divergent from the norm," a rock concert was not on the list. These were supposed to be my people! I couldn't say anything. For the first time since choosing to rewrite my genre, I felt a little wave of shame, like she had just pointed out something very wrong with me and done so for the world to see. I get it now: what I was feeling was a reaction to being "read" both as a genre and in the cultural context noted above. I think about this moment often, and my reaction varies from wishing I'd said any manner of thing about the politeness of minding one's own business to simply wishing I'd managed a kind word that might have changed her perception. But at the time, all I managed was a defiant chin thrust and a grunted "Mmhmm . . ." which was returned before she summoned me through the gate and to the field.

Of course, more than a decade later, I understand a little better what was happening in that interaction with the security guard. She was using her antecedent knowledge of "natural" hair colors, of religious convictions, and of people with dyed hair and transferring all that knowledge onto her reading of me. **Antecedent knowledge** is "all the things a writer already knows that can come into play when a writer takes up any kind of writing" (ISU Writing Program). And since writing and reading are inextricably linked activities, the same is true of readers. When we read a text or a person, we apply the things we already know to help us interpret what we're seeing and make meaning. Unfortunately, as I've said before, some of what we know about people comes from stereotypes born and replayed throughout our culture. The security guard was simply engaging in **invisible transfer**, which is an "implicit process" that occurs when one is "instinctively drawing from [their] prior knowledge and acquired skills" (ISU Writing Program). As a security guard, I'm sure it had been her job to read people and make snap decisions about them long before she'd ever met me. But when we engage in reading people like genres, that sort of quick reading and reliance on antecedent knowledge that may include stereotypes, while understandable, is imperfect. You can learn just about as much about a person's identity and personality at a glance as you can by skimming a 600-page novel for ten minutes. You might get a hint or a whisper of the gist, but you won't *know* them.

I can't know for certain what was going through her mind as she made those comments and held me back for the extra security check, but I can reflect on my own uptake process after that situation. **Uptake** is "the process we go through to take up a new idea and think about it until it makes sense" (ISU Writing Program). It is also a tracing of what we've learned and how we've gone about learning it. It took more than a few years for me to finish tracing my uptake from that encounter, but it consisted of two valuable lessons that I learned, both of which came from standing in that vulnerable position and feeling judged and more than a little surprised. Lesson number one: misreading people as a genre can work from both sides of the conversation. I had assumed that because I was going to a rock show, I would be among like-minded individuals who wanted to express themselves creatively and externalize their internalized individuality. I hadn't thought about the stadium employees having different values, emotions, or antecedent knowledge. And lesson two: after two trips around my body with the security wand, I learned for the first time that boldly colored, "unnatural" hair can be viewed as a threat to the "norm" and as such, can be a threat in general.

Divergent from the Norm: What Happens When Genre Conventions Are Broken?

That day at Soldier Field just convinced me of the importance of finding people who would know and accept me as I am. I'd always felt a bit different from the people I grew up around, so it became important to me that I show even more of my inner self on the outside. At twenty, I figured that if people could see my divergence before they got to know me and still choose to lean in, maybe they would eventually be able to accept me.

The other thing that day brought up was my curiosity. Why did that security guard think it was OK for her to speak to my personal life? And more importantly, what was it about blue hair that felt so morally or culturally threatening or triggering? After all, I was a law-abiding, taxpaying citizen who was working eighty hours per week as an accounts receivable clerk for an auto parts manufacturer. I didn't use "party" as a verb. I didn't even have a "crowd" to run with. When I wasn't in school, I spent most of my evenings at my eight-year-old niece's swim practices.

I needed to understand more about the history of brightly colored "unnatural" hair.

It Didn't Start with Kylie Jenner: History of the Genre

In my twenties, I spent a lot of time trying to catch up on all the trends and pop culture I'd missed as a sheltered teenager and, as young people are wont to do, also trying to figure out what I liked and what kind of artists I could identify with. Music has always been a huge part of my life and my identity, and each time I found a new artist that I liked, I'd end up downloading their whole catalog and falling down a YouTube research rabbit hole (that's a really polite way to say: I dare you to find a Nirvana documentary that I haven't seen at this point). So, I feel like I have something of an understanding about the relationship between brightly colored hair and punk subculture. But, for this article, I wanted to understand even more. Once more to the research rabbit hole!

According to an article written for *Byrdie.com* ("Your one-stop destination for insider beauty secrets"), humans have been dyeing hair since 1500 BC, but the first documentation of an "unnatural" color dye is credited to William Henry Perkin who "created the first synthesized dye in 1863"—a mauve color he named "Mauveine" (Hopp). From there, the article chronicles the rise of L'Oréal in 1907, the American obsession with platinum blonde hair thanks to Jean Harlow and Howard Hughes's film in 1931, and eventually the beginnings of celebrity endorsements and partnerships with hair color brands in the 1980s.

And then, nothing. There is a gap in the timeline of the Byrdie article between the 1980s and 2014 when Kylie Jenner debuted her teal tips. "In May of 2014, while most of the population was embracing sombré and other, more natural-looking hair color techniques, Kylie Jenner took the opposite approach and made her first major hair color transformation . . . with the now-iconic teal blue tips" (Hopp). Given what I know about the punk movement and that my own "first major hair color transformation" happened a full four years before Kylie Jenner, I was stumped to see this suggestion of an origin for brightly colored hair. The Byrdie article is not the only one I've seen that marks the fashion timeline in this way. So, I left behind the mainstream beauty websites and went on to specifically researching punk history with the hope of discovering punk fashion trends that filled in the gap between the '80s and 2014.

While I was researching punk subculture, I learned that women were dyeing their hair pink as early as 1914 (Felsenthal). However, at that time, it wasn't a subversive punk move; it was the height of wealth and fashion (Felsenthal). Still, that didn't explain how brightly colored hair moved from being something coveted by the upper classes to something that resulted in my being stopped by a security guard in 2010. If anything, it just complicated the reading. But that kind of makes sense too, right? After all, genres do not work outside of the systems in which they're created any more than people exist apart from the systems in which they live. My instincts and antecedent knowledge told me that as fashions change and are taken up by other groups, the meanings change with them. Since the punk movement is more recent than the fashionable ladies of 1914, I continued my search.

To the best of my research, it seems that brightly colored hair dye is a product of the glam punk scene in New York City and was first made popular by Tish and Snooky Bellomo who created the Manic Panic brand in the East Village at St. Marks Place in 1977 (Laskow). It was the first punk brand and store in the US, and though they sold all sorts of vintage fashion items, they eventually became famous for their brightly colored hair dye (Laskow).

Kylie Jenner and other famous people who have brightly colored locks have helped to mainstream the fashion and creative self-expression so that "Manic Panic is going through a bit of [a] renaissance right now, as pop stars from Rihanna to Katy Perry decide to dye their hair bright blues, red, pinks, greens, and more"; however, "the company [and brand] got its start [at] the store on St. Marks Place" (Laskow). Given the brand's success for more than forty years, it feels fair to equate their longevity with the continued popularity of brightly colored hair even beyond the New York punk scene (especially now that you can buy their products online).

So, You've Dyed Your Hair. Now What? A Close Reading of Your New Genre

If choosing to dye your hair a bold or bright color is a form of self-expression, perhaps the last and biggest question is what are you expressing? For me, I like to color my hair the way that some people like to decorate their homes for the seasons. For Christmas (2020), I dyed my hair dark evergreen with a single streak of "ice" blonde (see Figure 2 at the end of this article) and ended up matching my Christmas tree. Apparently, green and gold are my Christmas aesthetic.

When I'm choosing a new color, the questions I ask myself (and my stylist) are often about how I'm feeling in the moment, what season we're in, and just as a practical and logistical consideration, what color am I trying to cover up?

Autumn is my favorite season—I am a Scorpio, after all—so once August hits, I find myself getting excited about going back to school, the leaves changing colors, and upcoming holidays, and that is often reflected in my hair color. This is usually the part of the year where I give up cool blues or bright, summery pinks and start coloring my hair with deep reds, dark purples, or other muted tones one might associate with fall. In honor of spooky season, my current vibe is navy blue, violet, and dark green—colors one might see in typical Halloween decorations. But once Valentine's Day passes, the winter snow is deep and beginning to turn black on the side of the road, and I'm counting the days until I can see (and sneeze at) grass again: out come the pastel Easter colors. Icy blues, lilac, peach—I've even done dusty rose à la 1914 (see Figure 3 at the end of this article). All this seasonal decoration and internal moodiness can be seen atop my head, but you'll never find marshmallow Peeps in my cupboards, and I just won't ever remember to hang a cobweb or Easter Bunny on my door.

Final Thoughts: Once More for Those in the Back

I know that some people may make assumptions about my character when they see the color of my hair; I've experienced it not only in 2010, but too many times since then to name here. I also know that the color of my hair does not have any impact on my ability to do my job, to be a kind and ethical person, or to function as a productive member of society.

I guess the trick here is understanding that genre conventions can shift and change given the context in which the genre is working. For example, horror movies are scary. There are certain conventions employed to make you feel unsafe as you watch: dramatic music, darkly lit scenes, cinematography that attempts to replicate the feeling of running or looking over your shoulder (e.g., *The Blair Witch Project*). But when those conventions are employed in an insurance commercial, we understand that those things aren't meant to scare us out of buying the insurance but are being used to make a larger point.

The same is true when we're reading people. Just as you would employ a genre analysis to any other text, we should also employ this critical skill while we read people as a genre. The ISU Writing Program's definition of **genre analysis** teaches us to "[look] underneath the surface features of visual design, sentence-level qualities, and style and tone to uncover how genres can [be] subject to (and can enforce) cultural, social, commercial, and political agendas." My hair is not purple because I identify as a punk; it's purple because I like purple and am excited that it's autumn. But if you asked me about my politics, you'd probably find out that I have some real questions about the genre "people" and the conventions we constructed to define them as a final product.

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Figure 1: Blue hair and Bon Jovi.

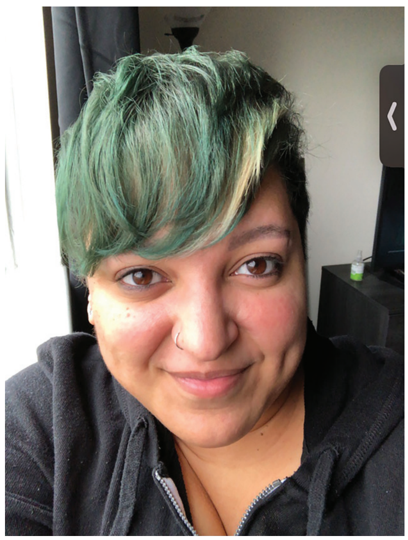

Figure 2: Green holiday hair.

Figure 3: Dusty rose hair.

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A Great British Baking Adventure: Antecedent Knowledge, My Dog, and a Dry(ish) Cherry Cake

Ashton Myerscough

Baking (in her kitchen at least) is a grand experiment. In this article, Ashton Myerscough explores how bakers use their uptake skills and baking antecedent knowledge to tackle super vague baking challenges in *The Great British Baking Show*. To do this, of course, she must experiment with one of the recipes from the show herself—here's hoping it's edible!

"On your marks, get set, BAKE!" I started watching *The Great British Baking Show* (*TGBBS*) the summer after I graduated college (AND got married a few weeks after I graduated . . . yeah, it was a lot). In a huge season of transitions, there was something about watching bakers jump into a tent (yes, a massive tent filled with ovens), in some gorgeous place in rural England, and make amazing (and sometimes downright disastrous) desserts that had me completely hooked. The truth is, I was traversing through this new space of what-happens-after-I-leave-school that I had no idea how to navigate. I had been given some tools from school, of course, and some life lessons I learned along the way, but just like the bakers on the show, I felt thrown into this completely new environment where I had to do a lot of, well, *improvising*.

So anyway, I'm sure you can picture me that summer: chilling on my secondhand couch I nabbed off Facebook Marketplace, snuggled up with my thick sausage-shaped beagle (and many other pets shown in Figure 1), watching *TGBBS* on repeat to avoid thinking about all those job applications I needed to fill out. And although a lot has changed between now and then, one thing hasn't changed: my beagle is still chunky. Oh yeah, and we're

Figure 1: My sausage beagle and the rest of the TV snuggling crew.

Figure 2: An artsy picture of an Italian crème cake I made this past spring for a birthday.

also still watching *TGBBS* nonstop together. And since then, the show has inspired me to bake all sorts of desserts for family and friends. I've attempted common recipes like lemon cupcakes and some more obscure, classic recipes, like an Italian crème cake for my mother-in-law's birthday (Figure 2). I'm still an amateur baker (and let me tell you, my toddler-level piping skills could use *a lot* of work) but I think that's the fun thing about baking—you don't have to be super talented to just jump in with some basic ingredients and try out a new recipe.

British Baking and Paul Hollywood's Coveted Handshake

If you haven't seen *TGBBS*, drop everything you're doing and get on Netflix pronto. But just in case you're reading this article for homework, and quality British television isn't on your priority list right now, here's a quick synopsis: Each season, *TGBBS* features twelve amateur bakers that compete in different baking challenges to win a classic Paul Hollywood handshake or an approving comment from Mary Berry (and later in the series, the cynical Prue). In each episode, the bakers must compete in three different challenges: a signature bake, a technical bake, and a showstopper bake. In the signature bake, bakers make a classic recipe with a personal twist to impress the judges. In the technical challenge, bakers get a vague recipe from one of Paul's or Mary's cookbooks and try to reproduce the baked good with limited information. Last, the bakers must produce a showstopper bake that has to impress the judges with excellent flavors and decorative detail.

How We Use Antecedent Knowledge When Baking New Stuff

Fast forward to this semester: We started learning about this thing called antecedent knowledge and how it affects us learning new things. I like to think of **antecedent knowledge** as the mental "luggage" you bring with you when you travel to new places—while the stuff you packed with you from home can be super helpful (like your toothbrush!), it sometimes is not helpful at all. After all, did you *really* need seven pairs of shoes for a weekend trip? Antecedent knowledge is what you *already* know, and a lot of times, you apply it when you find yourself in new, unfamiliar situations.

Anyway, I was sitting in class, and one of my classmates says to me, "You know, all this stuff we're learning about antecedent knowledge reminds me a lot of baking a new recipe. You use the knowledge you already have about baking to try a new recipe. Sometimes our past knowledge helps us, and sometimes it isn't super helpful, and we need to learn new ways of baking stuff." OK, maybe that's not *exactly* what she said, but that's what I heard, and that's all that matters, right? This was my first "aha!" light bulb moment for understanding the concept of antecedent knowledge.

Later, when I was at home chilling and watching *TGBBS* as per my usual, I was smacked with my second antecedent knowledge light bulb. Since I started watching *TGBBS*, my favorite part of the show has been the technical bake challenge. No matter how confident or prepared a baker acts at the start of the show, the technical bake challenge will have them on their knees praying in front of their ovens for something they made to turn out edible.

The technical bake is the biggest challenge for bakers because it's the *only* challenge in the show they can't prepare for. For this challenge, the bakers are given a sketchy list of ingredients and a few extremely vague instructions on how to bake the thing. The how-to steps of the recipe intentionally omit key information about how to bake the thing, too—like how long something should be baked, how it should look, and more. There are no pictures (eek!), and they aren't offered any help from the judges, so if they have no experience baking the recipe, they are usually in rough shape. Sometimes the judges are kind enough to give measurements for the ingredients they are using, but later in the season, they don't provide any help for the bakers. And these recipes aren't your average let's-make-a-biscuit kind of recipes, but are usually obscure, older recipes that no one knows the name of and that came out of the ancient cookbooks of Paul and Mary.

While Paul and Mary calmly eat the finished product from the first round/signature bake over a steaming cup of tea, the bakers are anxiously trying to make sense of the super vague recipe in the time limit they have been given. Many times, a baker's first comment about the challenge is, "I've never heard of a [weird name of baked good] before," which must be a terrible feeling—being asked to bake something on public television that you haven't even *heard* of before. But the challenge seems to turn in a baker's favor when they say, "You know, this recipe reminds me of . . ." And for them, it's the "aha!" moment where their antecedent knowledge about baking kicks in and goes to work for them.

For example, for a technical challenge, maybe the bakers are asked by Paul and Mary to bake this bread called babka, and none of the bakers have heard of it before. But, despite the lack of understanding when it comes to making babka, the bakers *have* baked other kinds of bread before, so they have antecedent knowledge about bread baking stored up in the back of their heads. So, based on their antecedent knowledge about their past bread-making experiences, they may make the new bread—babka—in a similar way.

Sometimes, a handful of bakers even decide to *ignore* the recipe's instructions and follow their antecedent knowledge instead, which I found to be super interesting. So, based on their antecedent knowledge about baking a certain thing, bakers may *take up* the recipe instructions in different ways. This is an example of **uptake**, by which I mean the way we think about new ideas until they make sense to us (ISU Writing Program).

Figure 3: Lou standing in solidarity with me as I bake in the kitchen. Or more likely, in the hope that I will drop something delicious on the floor.

Antecedent knowledge, and how bakers take up that knowledge, can leave them making some interesting decisions in the heat of the kitchen, with sometimes excellent and other times disastrous results. But in my quest to fully understand the antecedent knowledge the bakers utilize in the tent, I had to set up an experiment with one of the technical challenges myself.

My Messy British Baking Experiment

Wait, but didn't you say you're an amateur baker?

Aren't these challenges made for the best bakers in Britain?

Yes, and yes, which is why I doubted I would be able to do this at all. But instead of letting my past baking failures get the best of me, I put on my **writing research identity** hat to help me figure out what skills and knowledge I already had about my own baking and *TGBBS*, and what stuff I still needed to figure out to make my experiment work (ISU Writing Program).

I searched online for lists of the challenges bakers had to complete each season. I decided to pick a bake from an early collection since it has been a long time since I have seen any of those episodes, and I doubted I would remember how the judging portion of the contest went (yay for being forgetful!).

I also wanted to pick an episode that was earlier in the collection because the technical bakes tended to get harder as the show progressed. I knew I *probably* couldn't become a semiprofessional baker overnight, so I eliminated the bakes I knew I didn't have the skill level for. I also avoided super obscure recipes that I wouldn't have any previous experience with because it would be difficult to experiment with how I used my antecedent knowledge if I didn't have any knowledge about a bake in general.

After looking through the episode titles and doing some online research, I finally landed on a technical bake from way, way back—season 1, episode 1 on Netflix ("Cake"). The recipe? Mary Berry's own cherry cake.

cue dramatic music

I chose a cake recipe because I had some prior skill with making cakes for people's birthdays, so I had a knowledge base built up about cake making (when going up against the best amateur bakers in Britain, you have to give yourself all the advantages you can). For my experiment, I also decided I wanted to make my technical bake as authentic to the show as possible. So, this is the information I gave myself for my cake-making adventure, which is the same information the bakers in the episode got:

1. Ingredient list
2. Extremely basic instructions
3. Bakers' comments from the episode

Although I didn't watch the judging portion of the show until after my bake because I didn't want any hints from the experts, I did rewatch the portion of the show where the bakers made this recipe in the tent. I did this research because in the first episodes of the seasons, the bakers will sneak glances and listen to what other bakers say to decide what to do in the challenge and sometimes help with (or copy) what a baker next to them is doing. For my experiment to be as authentic to the tent as possible, I needed to be able to "collaborate" with my fellow bakers. So, I wrote down the bakers' comments

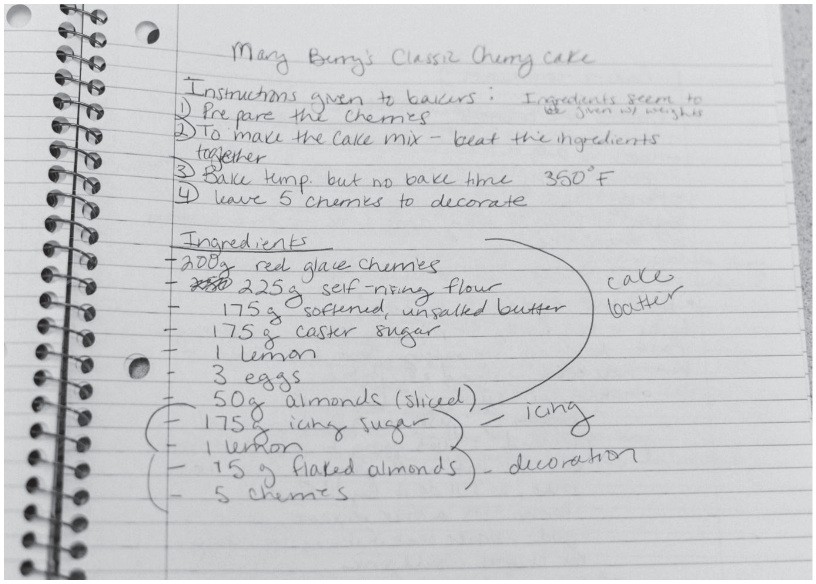

Figure 4: My notes on Mary Berry's cherry cake.

as they worked through the challenge, and I referred to the comments as I worked on my bake.

After I took notes on my ingredients, instructions, and comments the bakers made (Figure 4), I was ready to bake! Well, not really. I also had to go to the store to get all the ingredients, Google some weird British ingredient names (what's a glace cherry??), and go to two different stores to buy a Bundt pan. But after all that, THEN I was ready to bake!

In the rest of this article, I'll go over:

1. How I baked and, more importantly, *why* I made certain decisions
2. The final product and judging
3. How baking stuff connects to school words like *antecedent knowledge*

Ready, Set . . . BAKE!

I started by turning on my oven to 350°F because I knew that I was short on time, and I have a bad habit of forgetting to turn my oven on before I start mixing my ingredients (and consequently leaving myself alone with a pan full of brownie batter, which is never a good thing).

Figure 5: My cherry prepping literacies in action.

The first instruction on the list was "prep the cherries." Yep. That's it. So, since I have no prior experience making cherry anything, I decided to look at my notes about the comments other bakers made in the tent during the "cherry prepping" part of the episode.

I noticed that most bakers washed the cherries, a few bakers cut them in half or quarters, and others left them whole. One particular baker named Nancy said that she was going to dip hers in flour to ensure the cherries didn't sink. No matter what the bakers decided to do, they were all actively taking up the new idea (prepping the cherries) based on their antecedent knowledge about baking with fruit. And based on their uptake of this instruction, many bakers seemed worried about the cherries sinking. I figured that may be one of the issues that Paul and Mary would be looking for here.

The cherries I bought did not look as large and nice and plump as the cherries that I saw in the show (dumb US cherries), so I decided I would rinse them and cut them in half (Figure 5). I was originally going to cut them in quarters to prevent them from sinking, but if I had tried, they would have turned to total mush (ick). I tried adding some flour to the mushy cherries to prevent them from sinking, but they mostly just absorbed into the general blob and didn't seem to coat them much (double ick).

Cake Batter and Dread of Overmixing

After the (double ick) cherries were "prepared" as well as I knew how, I set them aside and started on the batter. In this portion of the recipe, it simply said, "Mix the ingredients for the batter."

With little to nothing in terms of instructions to go on, my antecedent knowledge about cake baking kicked into gear. I decided to mix what I considered the "wet" ingredients (butter, sugar, and eggs) separately from the dry ingredients (flour). I was taking up this recipe direction solely on what I knew about cake baking—that usually dry ingredients were separate from the wet. Then you would pour the dry ingredients into the wet and mix them in slowly to avoid lumps.

I also decided to sift my flour and sugar with a big metal sifty-cup thing. I did this to avoid clumps of flour and sugar. I knew that this cherry cake was a sponge cake, which if I remembered correctly, was a lighter kind of cake. The only other cake I had made that was similar was that Italian crème cake, and I thought the recipe told me to sift my ingredients then (or maybe that was scones??). Taking up our antecedent knowledge can be uncertain and messy, ya'll.

I decided to start in the mixer with my slightly microwaved butter and sifted sugar (which I sifted with my fancy sifter thingy). I mixed this on a medium speed until the butter and sugar were evenly mixed.

Figure 6: Zesting the lemon.

Then I added my eggs to the mix. A funny note about the eggs, I set them out to get to room temperature before I started my recipe because every cake I baked in the past (and many other recipes) recommend that eggs be at room temperature for *reasons* that I really don't understand, so I did it anyway just to be safe. So, I added *another* step to this recipe based on my past experiences. I zested my lemon into the batter and saved the rest of the lemon for my icing (Figure 6).

This whole time, I was super worried about overmixing the batter because whenever I bake anything, I feel like I see stuff in giant red all-caps letters on the recipe saying: **DO NOT OVERMIX THE BATTER!** Because I was scared about bombing this cake, I mixed the eggs into the other wet ingredients until they were *just* incorporated. I also added a splash of vanilla to the batter even though it wasn't on the ingredient list—because what kind of cake doesn't have vanilla in it?? It seemed so odd!

Figure 7: EXTREMELY CAREFUL folding.

After the wet ingredients were finished, I folded the sifted flour into it *extremely carefully* because I knew that the whole success of the cake could hinge on how I mixed the stupid thing (Figure 7).

Then I realized that I forgot there were supposed to be almonds crushed up in the batter too (oops), so I toasted them because for the German chocolate cake and the Italian crème cake, I had to roast all the nuts in a pan. I also remembered in *TGBBS* Paul would criticize folks for not toasting nuts in their recipes, so I used my antecedent knowledge about the show to make sure I had the best bake possible. I also remembered from my past nut-toasting experiences that it was crazy easy to burn them. And I'm a broke college student, so I didn't want to buy new almonds.

Figure 8: Toasting the almonds (sort of).

I turned the pan of almonds on a lower heat and waited for the almonds to smell nice and yummy, but it took too long, and I'm an impatient person and this is a *timed* bake. I cranked the heat up until I thought the almonds were smelly enough but not on fire, and I called it good (Figure 8). I dumped them into the cake batter with the weirdly smashed cherries, poured it into the greased Bundt pan, and popped it in the oven (Figure 9).


Figure 9: The batter goes in the pan and then into the oven.

Even though I was given a temperature for the oven, I wasn't given instructions for how long I should bake it. I knew timing would be crucial for my oven time. I could see Paul Hollywood shaking his head in front of me, clucking at all my many mistakes. I had heard him say it too many times before. "Sponge is tricky. Too short in the oven and it's raw, too long and it's burnt." And then, of course, I'd burst into tears. But at least I could cry in the privacy of my own kitchen and *not* on national television.

The Classic Praying-to-the-Oven Part of the Challenge

In this part of the challenge, many bakers tend to look at their competitors to figure out when they should pull their cake out of the oven. So, I used this as an excuse to consult my notes regarding how long the other bakers in the tent decided to bake their cakes.

While working in the tent on the show, bakers guessed anything between thirty and forty-five minutes for the bake time on this cherry cake, so I decided to stick with the more conservative thirty-minute time limit because I was terrified of burning the thing. I set my timer and walked away.

Aaanndd then promptly remembered I forgot I had to make the glaze. I ran back to the kitchen, squeezed lemon juice into powdered sugar, and mixed it with a whisk. When I read it was supposed to be a glaze, I thought a glaze was like frosting, but a lot runnier. I added some extra lemon juice to make the glaze a little runnier. Again, I saw myself using my antecedent knowledge about what a "glaze" versus a "frosting" was to get the consistency of the stuff right.

At thirty minutes, my timer went off and I did what all good bakers do during the technical challenge—I sat in front of the oven on my knees in a watching-my-cake-and-praying stance. I poked the top of it and the cake still seemed too squishy and wet, so I nervously waited five more minutes. Each second felt like an eternity as I watched the cake turn a light golden brown.

After those five minutes, I noticed that although the cake looked fine on the top, the edges were starting to look VERY brown. Thus, I freaked out and pulled it out of the oven like a maniac, with Paul Hollywood's words haunting my mind.

And then I realized I had no plan for how to get it out of the dumb pan.

And I had no countertop space that wasn't splattered in sugar and flour.

After fumbling through my disorganized pan cabinet, I finally dragged out a cooling rack. I placed it on top of the Bundt pan and clumsily flipped my cake out onto the table.

As I flipped it out, I noticed that the part of the cake that was in the pan (which was the top of the cake when it was flipped) was a LOT browner than the part I was seeing from the oven.

Well, oops. Just like in any technical bake, you gotta work with what you've got. Which in my case was a maybe burnt sponge?

The . . . Decorating? I Think?

Then it was time to play the waiting game. I knew from melting the icing on many birthday cupcakes in the past that if I put the icing on the cake while it was hot, it would run everywhere and probably ruin the whole thing.

Figure 10: Ready for decorating.

Figure 11: The balance between "do it quick" and (trying to) "make it pretty."

But I was also running out of time (and patience), and I still needed time to glaze and decorate the cake.

I waited until I felt like the cake was just cool enough and broke out the icing. This is the moment I was worried would break me. When I've baked cakes before, I have gotten so deeply frustrated by piping that I would drive myself crazy trying to perfect it.

I knew I didn't have the time to be a perfectionist about the glaze, so I slopped it on top and let it run all over the cake. After everything was super sugary and sticky, I tried to make the leftover cherries and almonds I placed on top look *decorative*—whatever that means (Figure 11).

Overall, I thought the cake didn't look too bad. But the more important question was: How would it taste?

My husband and I grabbed a thick slice of cherry cake and sat on the couch, ready for the judging portion of the show (with all the pets waiting and hoping for a bite, of course). After watching the episode, we decided that Mary and Paul were concerned about a few specific different aspects of the cherry cakes:

- The sponge should be lightly colored and completely cooked.
- The cherries should be evenly dispersed throughout the cake.
- The glaze should be a good thickness for the top of the cake (bonus points if you piped it prettily).
- The top of the cake should be decorated neatly with cherries and almonds.

The Judging (Via a 2010 TV Version of Paul Hollywood and Mary Berry)

How did my cake compare to the competition? Well, the cake was definitely darker in color than the ones on the show, and my sponge was a little dry. I

Figure 12: Paul and Mary judge the cake (in absentia).

Figure 13: The product of my antecedent knowledge experiment.

Figure 14: The product enjoyed.

think I probably should have watched the oven a little closer than I did because the cake ended up overbaked. However, my glaze and my decorations seemed pretty standard compared to other cakes, and some bakers' glazes were far too runny. My glaze was thin enough to drip down the cake, but not so thin that it all washed off the sponge.

With my drier sponge, my husband and I determined I would have gotten second-to-last place, one place above the guy who forgot to put his cherries on top of his cake (to Mary's extreme horror). Poor Jordan. He just didn't read the directions the whole way through. I've learned that when you're baking new stuff, it's always a good idea to read through the whole recipe beforehand (based on my antecedent knowledge of my own past cooking and baking failures!).

What Did I Learn About Antecedent Knowledge?

So, what did I learn? First of all, I learned that we can take up our antecedent knowledge in a way that can help "fill in the gaps" of our knowledge about new learning situations. There were times in my experiment when my antecedent knowledge definitely came in handy, like how I knew that a glaze should be a different consistency from a frosting because of my past icing experiences (see my Italian crème cake earlier in this article where I used "frosting"). We all take up new learning situations in different ways, and I used my antecedent knowledge a lot when

I encountered this new recipe—especially to fill in the gaps of my own skills and knowledge.

But after I looked back at the full recipe of Mary Berry's cherry cake, I thought it was crazy how my antecedent knowledge about cake baking made *more* work for me in a lot of ways. For example, in Mary's full recipe she just had you mix all the cake ingredients together. No separating the wet and dry ingredients, no meticulous folding of the batter, no eggs at room temperature. In the end, I added *multiple steps* to the whole process. I made things a lot harder for myself by adding all these extra steps that I didn't even need—all based on my uptake of my antecedent knowledge about cake baking.

Or sometimes I avoided certain actions (like piping the glaze onto the cake) based on my antecedent knowledge about my past frosting experiences. By using my antecedent knowledge here, I constantly played it safe because I was afraid to try anything new—especially in such a high-stakes situation. But had I been in the real competition, I would have gotten extra points from Paul and Mary for showing an extra skill with some fancy piping. However, based on my past experiences, I didn't even attempt it. This reminded me that although some antecedent knowledge can be helpful when we're taking up new learning situations, some antecedent knowledge is like that heavy stuff we shouldn't have packed in our suitcase in the first place—it can weigh us down and stop us from doing super cool stuff, like taking risks and trying new ways to do a thing.

My baking adventures reminded me a lot of the experiences I had in the classroom with antecedent knowledge, too. When we go into our college classes for the first time, we don't really know what to expect. We use our antecedent knowledge when considering what we know about student-ing, teachers, and assignments to help us navigate our new space. Sometimes our antecedent knowledge can help us do something new because of our past experiences, but sometimes it holds us back, makes more work for us, and stops us from trying new things because we don't think we'll be any good at it. But I think the most important thing is that if we're aware of how our antecedent knowledge is informing our decision-making, we will be able to learn better and more confidently in the future.

And, you may be wondering, "What does all this have to do with my literate self and my writing? This is a writing journal, after all." Yes, I was getting to that, I promise! In our writing classes and beyond, sometimes we will be asked to make something with confusing instructions, or write something we procrastinated on and now are pulling an all-nighter to finish—all sorts of wacky writing scenarios. Sometimes we will be asked to write in genres we're super familiar with, and sometimes we will be asked to make something completely new and have no idea where to start.

What I've learned through this baking adventure is that when we're writing anything, we're approaching that new situation with a jumble of antecedent knowledge (that could be helping or hurting us) and strategies to take up all that new information. But the best part is, unlike the technical challenge in the baking show, you aren't alone in the chaos! You have a whole community of writers around you that are having all sorts of struggles and triumphs in their own writing. You can reach out to others for writing strategies, help with revision, and genre samples to help you along the way. In this crazy, sometimes pretty technical and confusing writing process, you aren't alone. And that's something to eat cake over.

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Ashton Myerscough is a second year Master's student in Rhetoric and Composition and also a photographer! In her free time, she loves baking technical recipes (right now, apricot tarts!), taking her little dogs on long runs, and reading in a book-club-of-two with her Dad.

Notes

THE GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF

MARY BARRY'S CLASSIC CHERRY CAKE

★ first preheat the oven to 350° degrees

1. Prepare the cherries

in half or quarters?

quarters tend to get messy! best to cut them in half

2 .To make the cake mix beat ingredients together

Don't over mix the batter

3. Bake temperature 350°

The bakers tend to bake between 30-45 minutes

4 . Leave five cherries to decorate

Be careful! Too short and it's raw, too long and it is BURNT!

200g red glace cherries
225g self-rising flour] dry
175g softened, unsalted butter] wet
175g caster sugar] - dry
1 lemon] wet
3 eggs] wet
50g almonds (sliced)] dry
175g icing sugar

People tend to heat eggs in room temp.

wait for it to cool before decorating

Paul hates when the almonds aren't toasted

be careful. these burn easily!

They probably want a glaze (cream frosting

★ Don't forget to ★ preheat the oven! ★

Dealing with Divergence: A *Grassroots* Co-interview on Antecedent Knowledge, Transfer, and Uptake

Madi Kartcheske and Jenn Tullos

Madi Kartcheske and Jennifer (Jenn) Tullos use the genre of a *Grassroots* Co-interview to help them process their developing understandings of writing as they move between different personal, academic, and industry environments. By talking through these concepts together, both Kartcheske and Tullos complicate their notions of uptake and antecedent knowledge as it relates to their writing and writing researcher identities.

Introduction

One of the first things I remember about starting my undergraduate degree was a sense of excitement. I was shedding the caterpillar form of high school, entering the cocoon of college, ready to graduate a self-assured butterfly who would know exactly what she wants to do with the rest of her life. In the four years since I graduated, I've learned that "the rest of my life" won't ever be quite so linear.

My name is Madi Kartcheske, and I'm a second-year Master's student here at Illinois State University. I sat down with Jennifer Tullos, a graduate of the PhD program at ISU who now works as an education manager for Planned Parenthood, to talk about the many things we've noticed about our lives and careers, both within and outside of an academic institution. Before we got into the "meat and potatoes" of our conversation, Jenn took some time to explain a little more about her current professional role:

J: I'm the education manager for the Education Department in Planned Parenthood. The idea of Planned Parenthood is that we have three legs. The "stool" is the analogy they use. We have the clinic side, which is the thing that most people are familiar with, the advocacy side, where we go out and lobby and do legislative work, and then we have the education side, where we do sex ed. So, I'm on the education side, and I'm in a particular affiliate that spans six states, and I'm the manager for both Washington state and Idaho. I'm usually in the education world, kind of, but it's so different than the education world that I'm used to, and it's also particularly different than academia. It's more similar to a K–12 [Jenn had experience teaching K–12 before returning to graduate school] . . . But even then, it's very different. I really thought I was going to spend my whole life in academia, which is very different than what I'm doing here.

Managing Career Trajectories

It was that last sentence in Jenn's introduction that really stood out to me—the idea that we have an assumed trajectory of our life and career, and how we sometimes have to manage and renegotiate those expectations depending on what life throws at us. In the Writing Program at ISU, we tend to think of **trajectory** as it relates to a text—the messy path it will take from the moment it is conceptualized and as it spreads throughout contexts and time. Here, I'm using that same definition and applying it to the literate activity that is all wrapped up in things like career choices and life goals.

I took up that notion of differing expectations as we continued chatting.

M: I think that's so interesting—so, I got my undergrad at ISU and was pretty involved in the Writing Program, and then I did an international student semester with a program called Up with People, where I was volunteering and doing performing arts. I was hired by them as their education coordinator just before COVID hit, and so I was in this socially aware, academic-minded space. Then, when COVID hit, I had to get a job, just like, as a legal assistant. And so, it has been challenging to be taken from that space of highly theoretical and also highly individualized learning to a family law space, which is a very emotionally charged space where these folks are going through the worst thing they've ever been through. And, now, transferring back into academia, I'm trying to figure out how I balance these genres that suddenly feel kind of restrictive. And I'm looking at the differences of power from maybe a more capitalist or bureaucratic center like a law office compared to something that is a different kind of bureaucracy and a different kind of capitalistic structure in academia.

J: Something that you said made me think of something, too. I feel like in this role I have now, it's the first time—what I'm about to say is going to be oversimplified—but it's the first time that I feel like I've ever really collaborated on a thing. Being a classroom teacher, being an academic, like you said, is a very individualized thing. You know, like it's *my* research, *my* dissertation, *my* class that I get to create. So, when I was teaching, especially for ISU because we had so much freedom, I would create everything. Like, especially in the children's literature classes that I taught, I would create the book list and the assessment and the lesson—like, literally everything was mine. And, of course, I collaborated the learning experience with the students, but at the end of the day, I was doing all this stuff, and yes, I'm with professors, and yes, I worked with other grad students and peers, but it was still highly individualized. And now I'm in this space where I supervise five people, and then also I'm a middle manager, so I have a team of five or six senior leaders above me, and so it's like everything we do is collaborative. It changes so many things about the way these genres are producing the way that we communicate.

Classroom Spaces, Organizational Interests, and Power

Jenn and I then got to thinking about how power is negotiated in these different places—both within a classroom and within these business and nonprofit settings—and how that changes the way that we communicate.

J: I mean, even simple things like the way we write E-mails feels very different, and it's funny to me because I was teaching an ENG 101 class—it feels like 1,000 years ago now—and I remember having this student whose task was to E-mail the chair of the English department, and she was freaking out. She was like, "Why is writing an E-mail so hard? This shouldn't be that hard." And then, you know, we got to have a really cool conversation about power and rhetorical situations and audience on these things, and I always thought that that was just a really interestingly teachable moment. And then here I am, you know, in her position where I feel like a student all over again, and I'm like, "Why is writing this E-mail so hard?" I had to write an E-mail to a senior leader basically pushing back on a decision that they were making that I didn't think was right, and that E-mail took me like two hours to write. I was completely sweating by the time I closed my laptop and, like, ran away. [. . .] I'm also interested in talking about communication styles because I've noticed that changed a lot, but I think that there's something there. I guess it's the "individual versus collaborative" thing, and at the end of the day, power is wrapped up in everything.

M: Yeah, as we've been talking, I've been thinking about the rhetorical situation of a classroom and the power that is inherent there. So, I worked with an organization called Up with People, and they are currently going through a really big shift from, frankly, unethical volunteerism that was well-intentioned, but not well executed, to something that is more explicitly conscious of the powers that are at play in a nonprofit, especially one that is tuition-based, where students pay tuition to have this experience. I think that in a nonprofit those power structures are a little bit easier to see because the literate activity system is almost more visible—you can see the hierarchy, you can see the procedures manuals—all these things become manufactured in a way that making those connections is easier to see, so on some level it's easier to disrupt. Versus, like, a classroom space, for example, I'm interested in the concept of disruption in a classroom space because it's so individualized, and even student learning is so individualized.

J: That's interesting to think about a classroom. So, I've done a lot of thinking about this, you know, and I did everything I could to flatten the classroom as much as possible, to democratize learning, to redistribute power. But let's not get it twisted that at the end of the day, I still very much had the power. I used a lot of self-assessment days on uptake-focused activities and really wanted to put assessment back in the students' hands, but I also still had to give grades. So, it's really complicated when it's like "Oh, yeah, I'm gonna be super radical," you know, "Flat Classroom Professor," and it's like, yes, and I can only do that because of the larger constraints ready to give me power, like my ability to democratize that space is still within this larger system. I think about Audre Lorde and "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (112), and it's just like, how much work are we actually doing? I think it's still worth doing, don't get me wrong. Like, "Oh, we can't actually deconstruct the whole thing so let's just be super heteropatriarchal," no. I think that we need to be aware of the fact that, like, as queer feminist or anti-racist our pedagogy is, we are still operating within a very restrictive system.

Flat Classroom Professor

I'd never heard of this concept before our co-interview, but "flat classroom" means something very similar to its imagery. Here Jenn is referring to a style of teaching that attempts to recognize the need for power dynamics in the classroom to be "flattened." That is, we need to take the excessive end-all be-all power away from the teacher and give it back to the students to make space for more open and honest dialogue and learning in the classroom.

M: It makes me think about stakes and power, as well. Like, in the classroom, yes, it's important to make sure that your ReggieNet announcements go out and that your observations go well, and those kinds of things, but at the end of the day, if a lesson doesn't go well, that's just a collective learning moment. I'll listen to my students, open a dialogue, and I'll do better. Versus, specifically with some of the stuff that I did at the law office, where it's like, I need to make sure that I'm communicating with this client in a way that's both, "You need to pay your bill," but not being insensitive of their personal and emotional situations. And if that goes poorly, I lose that client, and if that happens too many times, I lose my job.

J: I think you nailed that because you're right: at the end of the day we've all had classes that have gone badly, and it's like, "All right, dust it off, come back tomorrow." Unless you're just a complete shit show of a teacher, you're not going to lose your entire ethos because of one class period, especially if you're the type of teacher who is self-aware enough to come back in again and say, "Oh, y'all, that sucked, I'm sorry." And I think, I don't know, you can be real and honest and authentic with students, so that's just such a rich place for originality and reciprocity, which is so beautiful because you're right. We have these federal grants where you have to report out to the Department of Health or whatever, and it's so serious. These are real people too, on the other end, it's not like this idea of a domain. They're human, and they can understand if we have a bad day or whatever, but at the same time, it's like, we need this grant money to do the important work of getting this education out to really vulnerable and underserved students. And I have to make sure that I'm on my game because I'm not trying to be the one that loses us money. Because that trickles so far down this domino line of third and fourth order effects.

M: That's so interesting, especially when looking at, as we talked about, the power and structure and institution of the classroom as being highly constructed in a way that is implicit or inherent and not something that we necessarily talk about because I think that there are things in a classroom that we take for granted. This is a place where we're re-evaluating what it means to be a good and bad student and what it means to be a good and bad writer, and then translating it into spaces where that's not the norm. We're translating those understandings into spaces where it's not accepted and, in fact, is something that's suppressed.

Positionality and Forgiveness

Jenn and I both have taught 100-level (and beyond) courses here at ISU, so it's important to recognize our positionality as we discuss these concepts. When we talk about "stakes" within and outside of the classroom, as teachers, we're hyperaware of the people that create that classroom space: *both* teachers and students. When Jenn and I talk about "forgiveness" in those spaces and a willingness to open dialogue about our mistakes, we don't mean to grant a free pass to teachers who are a "complete shit show," as Jenn so frankly put it, and don't take responsibility for their mistakes or challenges in the classroom. The flexibility we reference in the classroom space is BOTH the dialogue that's opened AND the steps that the teacher takes toward improving the classroom environment. It's an active process; it doesn't place blame on the students, and for us, it goes both ways. In our classrooms, we strive to recognize each person in the space as just that—*human.* We are willing to listen to and accommodate the mistakes of our students, just as they are willing to provide feedback and shape the classroom when we make mistakes.

These allowances to be human are emphasized by the Writing Program here at Illinois State, but it's not the reality everywhere—not even within our own departments. When we talk about forgiveness, we don't mean to say that our actions as teachers don't matter in the classroom, or that we're somehow *less* responsible because it's "school" and not the "real world." Quite the opposite, actually. What we're talking about is the safety that we try to build into our classrooms where, when mistakes happen (and they will, no matter how perfectly any of us attempt to plan), we can address them openly and honestly with each other so that we can put in the work to try again. It's something that we highly value, no matter what setting we're in.

J: It makes me think of the way that academia, in particular, especially when we get to those grad classes like 402 and everything else, is so theoretical. And I love that about it, but it's also kind of a thorn in my side, where I feel like, not always, but sometimes there's a failure to acknowledge daily practices of our work. It's "theory," but like, "OK, but why? How does that impact our everyday classrooms or material, living realities within those classrooms?" Don't get me wrong, I'm still very much geared toward theory. As a person, I love it. So, I get into these meetings sometimes, and everything in my world now is praxis. Like, "We need to go, we need to move forward, what is our actual tangible thing?" And so, I've gone in before and was like, "OK, but let's unpack what it even means to do something well or not." Kind of what you're saying, like we're deconstructing good versus bad writing. So, I go in to do that same kind of work, and everyone is like, "OK, that's interesting, but that's also not why we're here." So, I have had to really evaluate when that can be helpful, and when it can be really inefficient to do stuff like that. It's hard because I have to constantly remind myself that I'm not in a graduate classroom right now. Like, this isn't the time to debate theory. Stakes are high; I'm on the line here, and, again, not that they *aren't* on the line in academia, but it's different.

Communication Styles

It wasn't only the stakes shifting in the transition from the academic institution we'd become accustomed to, but also the practical application of communication and language radically shifting in order for us to be successful in these spaces.

J: Something that is privileged and necessary in the industry space, at least the one that I'm in right now, is really clear, concise, direct communication, and everything written. That's very uncomfortable for me, and I think it's partly because of how I was raised. There are so many things involved, but in general, I operate in a very high context way where I jump into a conversation and I assume we're all on the same page already. I don't have to unpack all these ideas necessarily because to do that almost feels condescending. In this conversation right now, we're doing that, where it's like, we go into this with a shared understanding of words like *uptake* and *rhetorical situation*. We're already here, so let's move forward, rather than if we were having this conversation with someone else who maybe didn't have our same training, we wouldn't be able to have this conversation. So, I find that I don't really start to unpack things until I'm writing an article and then have a particular section where I have to define my terms. So, for me, I feel like grad school allowed me to operate in that way, where it's high context and a lot of time kind of indirect and theoretical. And now I'm in this world where it's very low context, like you need to explain everything. You need to be very direct about what you're doing. We all get, like, 90,000 E-mails a day. So, it's like, "No, why are you E-mailing me? It's fine that you E-mail, but you have to tell me why, quickly." There's a kind of luxury of time that academia has, which the industry doesn't. And it necessitates completely different communication styles.

M: I love that phrase: "the luxury of time." I think that, even now, because I was so saturated in nonprofit education, I feel like I need to figure things out *now.* And all of my professors are like, "No, you can take time; you're trying to figure things out," and I can feel the difference between those two situations. In the past, the feeling was "No, this was due last week, and I need to be moving on." I think productivity and time are really intimately tied in that context.

J: I've never been a super balanced person; in both grad school and the PhD program, I could literally write an entire chapter of my dissertation in a weekend. It was basically like, not sleep for an entire weekend, crank out the chapter, and then be like "Woo!" and then not do anything for the next week. It was very, like, Go, Go, Go, versus Crash. So that's another thing about time, in this job: this is the first nine-to-five job I've had, and I'm just like, wow, I'm mentally and physically in a way, like, I don't have the stamina. This is a skill or a muscle I didn't realize was a thing; I mean, "the luxury of time" is so interesting because in academia, sometimes we have these deadlines, where it's like "Oh, shit." For the most part, those are often self-imposed. It was because I had to graduate with my PhD in four years—besides the fact that, you know, everything comes back to capitalism and we don't get paid and I need a job. So, that's super real, but if we could take that context away (which we know we can't), that deadline doesn't matter to the *institution*. I don't know—I'm just like, "Wait, you mean that I have to get up and work again tomorrow, and then I have to do it the next day, too?" And, you know, I love the job, but in academia it wasn't that way. It's just wild, the kinds of rhythms we get used to with that kind of thing.

M: It's been so flip-floppy for me because I got my undergrad, which is different from grad classes in a lot of ways, but it has the same pressures of doing more classes and having more assignments due more often. Then traveling and working with Up with People—you don't get a break, you're traveling. You live with your students, you teach your students, like—every moment, you're on the job. And then, when I got to the law office, it was weird because I would get tasks done too quickly. Because people were like, this is something that you're supposed to be able to budget your time with; you're supposed to be able to balance the things that you're doing, but I would just treat it like it was a marathon. Until, like, month three, I was physically and mentally exhausted because I was just like, I'm used to the kind of work where you receive a thing, you start the thing, and you work until the thing is done. So, yeah, now being in the throes of Grad culture, where it really is like your deadlines are at the end of the semester so budget your time the way that you want, but you're constantly aware that you don't have anything to do on a Thursday—that's very foreign to me.

J: I felt like I got very used to and good at the rhythm of academia. I was like, OK, I know there's going to be a pop in mid-August, and there's going to be a pop in October, and there's going to be a big push at the beginning of December. And my body actually came to expect and respond to that rhythm; I got good at it and got good at negotiating and expecting it and working around and planning for it. And now my rhythm is much more even, which in some ways, is way healthier, I just want to acknowledge. But in other ways, it becomes a bit monotonous. In academia, I could be much more volatile, which isn't healthy, necessarily, but it's exciting.

Questions of Audience

The literate activity we engage in always exists in conversation with others, and so our thoughts about power and pressure and communication, of course, led us back to that notion of an intended audience.

M: I think about that a lot, specifically about audience and who this is for and what we are doing this for. Because even considering the different audiences that I used to teach and the audiences that I will be teaching next semester, I had access to different people in nonprofit education and different spaces there. And so, when thinking about who my research is for, like, who do I want to talk to? Who do I want to value in these spaces? I feel like a lot of times we talk about making spaces more accessible and wanting to make verbiage more accessible, but then, when it comes down to actually putting it in practice, those sentiments are the first to go out the window. It's like, yeah, it's good that we had that conversation, and now we feel better about ourselves, but I still need you to make these specific rhetorical moves for these specific rhetorical situations.

J: One hundred percent, yeah, I completely agree. I did the same thing. My dissertation, I kind of waxed poetic in the introduction about how I want this to be accessible and I'm going to write it in a way that's, you know, *blah, blah, blah,* and then, you're right, at the end of the day there were moments where I was doing some theoretical heavy lifting; I still fell back into that comfort zone of density. For whom, you know? It does nothing but uphold the structures that are already in place. Again, that's so different from the role I'm in now, where clarity is more important than anything else, because we're working in a huge team, the stakes are higher, we're limited on time and capacity, and so if we're going to get muddled in our language, that wastes time. It's insufficient, and, ultimately, it could damage the end goal, which is to get the information out there. There are memes of academics saying, "to put it simply," and then following with a sentence that makes no sense. I do know people who think that they write clearly, and it's like to you, in your specific cohort of people who are also, like, freakin' geniuses who can sit there and read Judith Butler like it's nothin', baby, this is clear. But to other people, it doesn't make sense.

Some Satisfying Transfer

But, even as we acknowledged this seemingly incompatible shift between our academic genres and our industry genres, Jenn began thinking about the undeniable transferable skills she's noticed within her new position.

J: I don't mean to immediately contradict myself, but when I was writing that E-mail that I referenced at the beginning where I was pushing back on a thing, I did have a moment where I relied on my academic training. I was like, OK, put your thesis statement in the first paragraph. And the E-mail was super long, like, this is not the way that most people in a corporate setting would write an E-mail, so it was still kind of a mix, and I was moving into part of the E-mail where I explain the context for this, aka a lit review paragraph, and I'm going to explain the evidence of how and why what I'm asking for would actually work aka the body of the argument, where you're doing your close reading, and then I have the conclusion which includes the "so what." And, in my mind, this E-mail is a condensed version, in structure, of a dissertation chapter or an academic article. It brought me joy when I thought about it that way, like, "Oh, look at this transference." But also, it made it easier for me to write because I felt like I'm not just having to write this E-mail that's really hard to write, I'm writing this thing that I know how to do, I know how to lay context, I know how to provide evidence, like, "OK, I can do this, take a deep breath, you know, move forward."

Conclusion

There was something comforting about this conversation with Jenn, especially as someone who is in the middle of a career panic. I was glad we didn't have perfect success stories and that she, too, struggled to figure out how to find herself and her identity in a space that was entirely unfamiliar to her.

I think sometimes we're fed this narrative in high school and college that *everything we do* will prepare us perfectly for the world "outside." And, in some ways, it's true. We can't help but learn from our lived experiences and make connections between them. But, in other ways, it's not. Sometimes, we spend a lot of time getting really good at a skill set that will actively work against the skills needed in another context. But, as we walked away from this conversation, I left feeling a bit more grounded. Though I'm not perfectly prepared for every situation I'll find myself in between now and forever, thinking through those conflicts of **antecedent knowledge**, or understandings we gain from past experience, can help to shed some light on how to proceed.

Here, I'd like to suggest a complication for our idea of antecedent knowledge—which, I recognize, will further complicate our ideas of uptake and transfer. (But that's OK, right? We already know writing is complex and messy in the best way possible, so our definitions should be a little joyfully messy, too.)

The ISU Writing Program defines these terms as:

- **Antecedent Knowledge**: all the things a writer already knows that can come into play when a writer takes up any kind of writing;
- **Transfer of Learning**: when you are instinctively drawing from your prior knowledge and acquired skills in order to achieve your present goal;
- **Uptake**: the process we go through to take up a new idea and think about it until it makes sense (if we get that far with it—sometimes we don't!).

If we take these definitions at face value, it's tempting to imagine these concepts as linear (Figure 1).

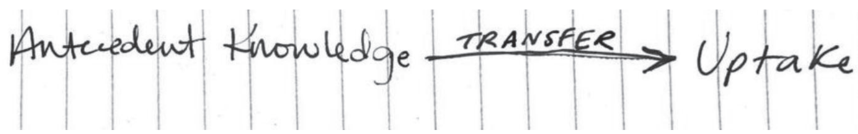

Figure 1: A handwritten illustration of antecedent knowledge flowing into uptake using transfer.

We have the things we already know, which we instinctively apply as we learn something new, which makes each of our uptakes unique or **divergent**.

However, when we look at the article, we've got language *everywhere* contradicting that linear notion. Jenn says, "I don't mean to immediately contradict myself," because we have different contexts where our academic training is either relevant or irrelevant. I say that failures in the classroom are a "collective learning moment," but then I needed to explore some nuance of that perspective once my editor suggested the antecedent knowledge of my readers. Our antecedent knowledge is selectively transferred, depending on its contexts, and sometimes it's reshaped *entirely.* So, perhaps, we should look at a visualization like the one in Figure 2.

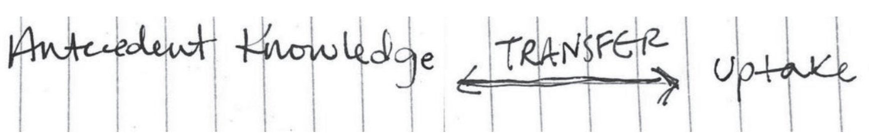

Figure 2: A handwritten illustration of uptake and antecedent knowledge flowing into each other using transfer.

But I still wasn't satisfied with this, either. It's too linear. It doesn't account for the varied contexts in which our antecedent knowledge is changed by our uptake or transfer, or when it camouflages itself or gets ignored. So, I came up with one final image—a definition that's good for now, and that might change and adapt as I continue thinking about myself as a writer and writing researcher (Figure 3). (Brace yourself.)

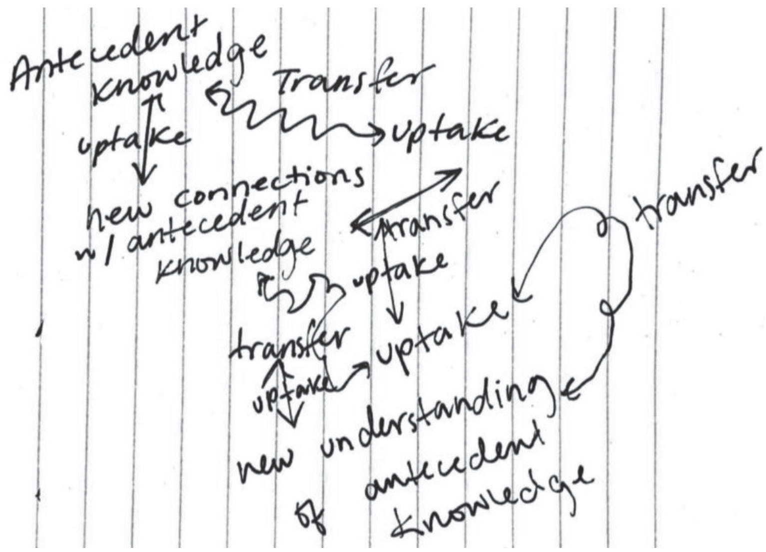

Figure 3: A handwritten illustration of uptake, transfer, and antecedent knowledge being constantly changed by each other in a very messy "flow" chart.

Looking back at this interview, you can see how easy it might be for us to be overwhelmed by the instability of our antecedent knowledge and uptake—much like the above visualization might be overwhelming for you to try to read. How do we know what will be relevant? And when? How can we trust that what we do will matter?

To those questions, I offer: There's something powerful in looking at the reality of who we are, what we know, and how that shapes the way we move through the world. It all matters; we learn something new (and compare it to something old) with each new space we occupy. One constant I keep returning to, at the center of it all: literate activity. Writing.

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Jenn Tullos (she/her) has a PhD in English with an emphasis in queer young adult literature from Illinois State University. She has a vast and diverse background in education, including as a K–12 teacher, community college and university instructor, nonprofit education manager, and corporate learning director. Despite her nonlinear career trajectory, everything Jenn has done professionally has always centered education and equity. She is a lifelong learner, writer, and writing researcher, both inside and outside of academia.

Notes

Mundane Creativity: Analyzing the Colors and Footnotes of a K-pop Song List

Danielle Eldredge

Using a definition of creativity that includes everyday activities, genres, and content offers us a broader perspective when it comes to appreciating different literary texts. As such, we can look at mundane pieces of text—like that of a song recommendation list—as creative. In this analysis of her K-pop song recommendation list, Danielle Eldredge examines how color-coding and footnotes can both be appreciated as aspects of creativity.

Introduction

Back when I was a junior in high school, I started listening to Korean pop music, commonly known as K-pop. After months of delving into this genre, I began to really love it. One day, I was informed by my friend that our mutual friend was interested in giving K-pop a listen. Excitement immediately filled my body! There was so much to show this friend about the different types of sounds, feelings, and emotions of K-pop that it was quite overwhelming. How could I possibly introduce all of this to her without sending an obnoxious amount of information that might repel her before she even begins listening to it? My solution was simple: to create a list of songs that I would recommend for her. And so, the "Superior Songs" list was born! That said, *how* I generated this list is what makes the entire text *creative*, according to Tusting and Papen's definition (more on that soon). In this analysis, I will examine my categorization of the songs using color and footnotes, and how my creation of these aspects of the text helped my viewer interact with the text.

What Is "Creativity?"

Before I answer this, allow me to explain Karen Tusting and Uta Papen's definition of creativity. In their analysis, "Creativity in Everyday Literacy Practices: The Contribution of an Ethnographic Approach," Tusting and Papen explicitly define creativity as, "Not necessarily [having] to refer to making something startingly original . . . [but] rather . . . [combining] the means and modes available to them [the creator] to make meanings" (7). To explain this more clearly, Tusting and Papen are arguing that for something to be creative, it doesn't exactly have to be something that has never been made by anyone else. Rather, it is how someone combines their resources in order to produce something that makes it creative. Given this, it is inherent that anyone can be a creative maker of text, not just the well educated or elite. In fact, Tusting and Papen also define creativity in accordance with how people, "produce, use, and generally interact with texts" (5). Everyone produces texts every day—from notes, to reminders, to essays, to lists—and are constantly interacting with their texts. Because people create and use things in ways that are unique to them, everyone is a creative maker of text according to Tusting and Papen.

Lastly, Tusting and Papen contribute another key aspect to their argument by stating, "We identify the creativity inherent in seemingly mundane forms of written communication, even where the texts themselves might show little evidence of . . . 'artfulness'" (7). Essentially, this quotation reiterates what was said previously about texts not having to be "startingly original." For any form of written communication, even something as simple as a bulleted list—which does not fit into the traditional standard of "creativity" nor does it portray any particular artistic talent—can be seen as creative. In brief, Tusting and Papen's definition argues three central points:

- **Creativity can be mundane:** That means even everyday tasks can be understood to include creative activity.
- **All humans engage in creativity:** Instead of creativity being an activity that only particular kinds of people engage in, creativity can be found in many everyday human activities.
- **Creativity is not just content:** It's not just the subject matter or genre that can involve creativity. When people remake and reuse texts, or combine them or repurpose them in different ways, this is also a creative activity.

It is important to keep in mind how this contrasts drastically from the traditional definition of creativity as being a quality of the artistically elite, which includes only certain kinds of genres with original content.

Nevertheless, if we use Tusting and Papen's definition, it is fair to argue that an ordinary song list, that was made by a seventeen-year-old girl, can be seen as a "creative" text.

Color-Coding as an Aspect of Creativity

As readers who have read my previous *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* article, "The Colors of Literacy" (issue 12.2, Spring 2022), may already know, color plays a significant role in my life. It is how I commonly picture the intangible things in life such as moods and feelings. As a result, I tend to picture colors in my mind whenever I hear a song, which segues into my first point. Each song in the "Superior Songs" list is categorized by the overall mood of the song. I made this explicitly clear by providing a key (Figure 1) on the very first page of the Google Doc before listing any songs.

Not only did this small section indicate what the colors translate to, but it also explains more clearly why the songs are colored the way they are. Since there usually isn't a clear-cut reason for why I see a song as a particular color, I had to put an extra effort into making sure that this whole section is comprehendible to my viewer. In other words, I had to sit down and figure out a succinct translation from colors to words. Because this is such an odd translation to explain, I had to make sure that I chose my words carefully when writing this key. Plus, I tried to make each color category as distinct as possible in order to avoid confusion because, oftentimes, colors may overlap (as they do in my mind when I hear a song). Nonetheless, using color in my creation of this text makes it unique to me because it is my personal means

Brief Color Code Description

- hype/intense songs **[red]**
  - some are really intense and get your blood flowing
  - others are just super hype and make you wanna get up and dance
- good/catchy bops **[orange]**
  - classic songs that get stuck in your head all the time bc they're just all-around good
- really hot/ groovy songs **[green]**
  - a few of these are just sexy idk how else to describe it lol
  - a lot are really smooth, like you can groove to it
- soft/chill songs **[blue]**
  - some are just soft
  - others are sad
  - quite a few are good songs to vibe to
- songs that give me chills **[purple]**
  - a lot of these are sad oops
  - the lyrics or the way the songs are sung is just so powerful to me
- bubblegum pop **[pink]**
  - cutesy bops

Figure 1: The color-coding key I created.

of organization. It isn't an entirely new concept, but how I use color-coding to achieve a goal is one of the reasons why this text is a creative text.

Furthermore, the colors are also creative in terms of how I intended my viewer to use them. In other words, I wanted my viewer to be able to pick and choose songs to listen to depending on her current mood. Since I gave her a pretty big list, I didn't want her to go into it not knowing what to expect. Therefore, the other reason I chose to use colors was to help give her an idea of what she is about to listen to. For example, if she isn't too familiar with how "bubblegum pop" sounds, I didn't want her to have a song like that thrown at her if she's not in the mood to get into it just yet. Likewise, if she knows she wants to listen to more chill songs while doing homework, rather than exciting and upbeat songs, she can just glance at the list and choose accordingly. This use of color to guide my viewer in interacting with my text can also be seen as creative.

Footnotes as an Aspect of Creativity

Following color, another important aspect of the creativity of my "Superior Songs" list are the footnotes I decided to include. As seen in Figure 2, everything is organized using headings and bullet points. Acknowledging this, I concluded that adding notes in between the bullets would disrupt the flow of organization that I had going on. Consequently, I decided that adding footnotes would not only be the most practical means of inserting miscellaneous text, but it would also be the neatest. This decision points to two things being creative: how I carefully crafted my footnotes and how I intended for my viewer to interact with them.

A Note About "Editor's Notes"

This sample (Figure 3) was extracted from the very first page of the entire nine-page document and is the very first text that appears, even before any songs. The primary purpose was to establish a brief introduction to the new music my viewer was about to listen to since it's something that is quite different from what she is used to. I even clarified some of the same things that are mentioned in this analysis.

From this sample, one can observe how much time, energy, and passion was put into crafting such a seemingly mundane document.

As I mentioned earlier, there was so much to introduce to my friend within this new genre of music that it was overwhelming. Not only in terms of the different songs, but the background of each song and/or artist was also a key component that I wanted to introduce her to. In fact, I even made a brief section for "Editor's Notes" (Figure 3) on the very first page of the document, which highlights some key things I wanted her to know before listening to the songs.

SOLO ARTISTS/ ARTISTS WITH SOLO ALBUMS

Chunga
- Roller Coaster
- Why Don't You Know

Taemin[10] (SHINee)
- Thirsty
- Move
- Pretty Boy (ft. Kai from EXO)
- Press Your Number
- Danger
- Goodbye
- Flame of Love

Sunmi
- Gashina
- Heroine

Lay (EXO)
- Goodbye Christmas[11]
- Lose Control
- What U Need?

Ten[12] (NCT)
- Dream in a Dream
- New Heroes

HyunA
- Lip and Hip

Yezi
- Anck Su Namum

[10] this man right here is a legend! stan him!
[11] there's a chinese and english version of this song, but i have the english one in my playlist and it makes me cry omg it's so sad
[12] also a legend oMg

Figure 2: Footnotes made about specific artists.

INTRODUCTION

Editor's Notes
- hi i love kpop so much and i tried to condense this list as much as i could but oops
- i left a lot of footnotes for extra info and my opinions you wanna check them out
- i tried to categorize these songs with umbrella categories; there's sO many different moods but i didn't wanna have 3409850394 colors either :/
- *** keep in mind *** that the typical korean girl group concept is different from that of the typical american girl group concept - they're supposed to be cutesy so a lot of their music is like bubblegum pop
    - i color coded them in terms of this concept ^
        - (so like hype/intense for girls is not the same as hype/intense for boys)
    - if you don't like them as much it's ok
- even if you don't like the song(s), i highly recommend at least watching the MV/ dance practice bc the choreo is SO GOOD OMG
- im trying really hard to be balanced here bc i love hype songs and boy groups skdfjsldkj

Figure 3: My "Editor's Notes" from the "Superior Songs" list.

Nonetheless, due to the large amount of information that was at hand, what I chose to include and how I chose to organize all of it, all while maintaining neatness, can be seen as creative because it shows how my style of organization is unique to me. To illustrate this more clearly, imagine having enough information to fill a textbook about any given topic. Now take all of that information, summarize it, offer some brief commentary, and make sure it stays under fifteen sentences. It's a lot of work, right? Is it, in the traditional sense, a shockingly new and never-before-seen task? Not exactly. However, I can guarantee how everyone chooses to summarize and comment on said information will be completely different. This is precisely the case with my footnotes. I decided to use footnotes rather than text boxes, parentheses, arrows, and so on because it was the neatest means available that would relay the necessary information without drawing too much attention away from the main goal of the list.

Much like how the color-coding section of the text required specific and succinct explanations, the footnotes required the same. I had to find that perfect balance for a decent footnote, which segues into my second point. How I constructed the footnotes so that my viewer can interact with them is, in itself, creative. Every text has its limitations; in this case, mine was how much information I can relay through footnotes. By far, the hardest part of the footnotes was choosing what to include and what to omit because the primary purpose of a footnote is to provide a *brief* background or description of a concept. In turn, it is crucial that each inscription is relevant. For someone as passionate as me about this music, I wanted to throw all kinds of information at her, so it was difficult to choose what was "irrelevant" enough to omit. However, making these decisions was crucial to how I intended my reader to interact with the text, for if I had too many, they could possibly be ignored or bore the reader. In terms of my previous analogy, I not only had to sort through that textbook of information to find what I wanted to include, but I also had to write summaries that were informative without being too lengthy and succinct without being incoherent.

The language that was used within each footnote further contributed to how I intended my reader to use the text. Since this was made for one particular viewer, I chose to make the language very informal and relatively silly. I also used a particular diction that my viewer would understand that would most likely not make sense to an outsider. This not only shows my creative ability to create text of a certain diction that is specific to one person, but also shows how the interaction with the text is important to the creation of the text.

Starting with the colloquial diction, examine Figure 2. In footnote 10 it says, “This man is a legend!” To many people this would make absolutely no sense. Since it’s footnoting a name that is most likely unrecognizable, the “legend” aspect probably wouldn’t make any sense since most people would immediately imagine legends such as Hercules or Iron Man, or maybe even inspirational leaders such as Nelson Mandela. But who is Taemin? It wasn’t my intention to be ironic, but rather hyperbolic in the sense that this particular artist is incredibly talented. Thus, it’s clear to see how choice of language is significant to the creativity of the text. Not only does it show how I manipulated words to mean something different from how they are traditionally viewed, but it also shows how it is directly related to the person that is interacting with the text. In fact, this was another point in Tusting and Papen’s definition of creativity. They argue that “the creativity inherent in people’s everyday literacy practices is socially shaped: how it involves adaptation to social and institutional constraints, [and] how it is drawn out and bounded by the potential and limitations of different contexts” (Tusting and Papen 9). What this means is that creativity can also be recognized through a creator’s adaptation of text with regard to its social context. As aforementioned, I deliberately used colloquial diction that was specific to my viewer. Thus, I “creatively” produced my text by specifically crafting it to fit the social context of how I intended my song list to be used. That is, I intended for my list to feel like it is a friend-to-friend text interaction, rather than a textbook-to-friend interaction.

To expand more on my last point, allow me to explain how choice of diction is dependent on who is viewing the text. Examine again Figure 2, footnote 10. You can see the phrase, “Stan him!” Again, to an outsider, this would probably have no meaning whatsoever, but my viewer understands exactly what I mean by this. As a result, who interacts with the text is an aspect of creativity, especially in this case, where my viewer can interact with that text much differently than most other people. Additionally, how the text within the footnotes was crafted to include our uncommon diction is yet another example of Tusting and Papen’s definition of creativity, particularly how the text is socially shaped.

Conclusion

The use of creativity in a text, according to Tusting and Papen’s definition, can also be seen in Lucas Weber’s “Literacy in Aviation: Aeronautical Inscriptions Take Flight.” When describing how he uses his inscriptions centered around preflight, Weber states, “I keep these inscriptions in my knee-board, which I attach to my leg to use in the cockpit" (27). Typically, inscriptions like that are quite mundane and seem anything but creative. However, the way he uses his inscriptions, by attaching them to his knee, is what makes his text unique to him and creative. Similarly, the way I created my text to revolve around my viewer, and how I intended for her to use my text, is unique in my own way and, likewise, creative.

It's clear to see how my "Superior Songs" list is creative. It is not the text itself that is startingly original, but rather my production and intended interaction with the text that makes it creative. This shift in what is deemed "creative" raises an important question: What do we gain in thinking about writing and texts and writers using Tusting and Papen's preferred definition of creativity? As my analysis suggests, we gain an appreciation of a wider array of texts, including a song recommendation list, and we can appreciate the author as being a creative maker of text. Essentially, we are not limited to a specific definition of creativity that only includes a small portion of the number of different texts that are produced daily. Tusting and Papen's definition also expands our appreciation toward the functions and processes behind said texts. An example would be things like color-coding and footnotes, which would often be overlooked and seen as typical or ordinary. However, looking at those things with a broadened definition of creativity in mind really opens up a new perspective toward the unique processes that are involved in people's everyday literacies.

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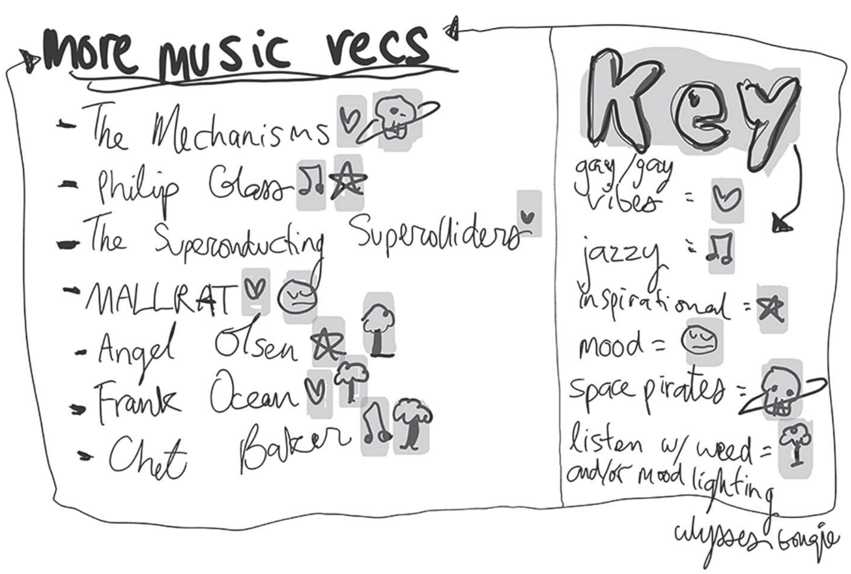
Danielle Eldredge is a free spirit who loves to travel, learn, meet new people, and experience life. She embraces all forms of beauty and creativity, and she aims to keep an open mind toward everything.

Notes


more music recs
- The Mechanisms
- Philip Glass
- The Superconducting Supercolliders
- MALLRAT
- Angel Olsen
- Frank Ocean
- Chet Baker
Key
gay/gay vibes =
jazzy =
inspirational =
mood =
space pirates =
listen w/ weed = and/or mood lighting

Left-Handed Literacies

Janine Blue

Being left-handed in a right-handed world comes with specific challenges and stigmas. We're the friend people don't want to sit next to at the movie theater (pre-Covid). The one out of every ten people. The evil character in old literature. The athlete that the coach never had to coach before. The one in orchestra class whose instructor struggled to demonstrate how to move small, novice left fingers across the strings. So much of how we interact with the world can be guided by our hands.

For example, literate activities, as a whole, cater to right-dominant hands and positions of the body. Tools, methods, and instruction favor those who put things in their right hand when they want to interact with the world. "And for those who are left-handed" is never an add-on in instruction or product labels. It's a lot to accept, and it sometimes seems like a bummer.

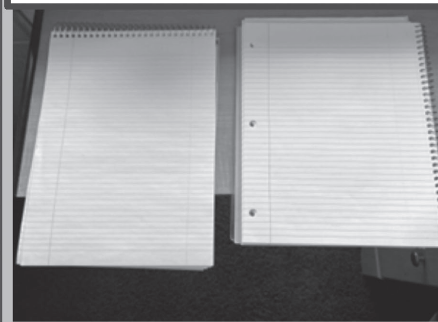
However, being left-handed also means being part of an exclusive (sometimes spatially awkward) community that outspokenly understands each other due to the exclusion and oversight of those in power who are right-dominant. And this community has created or expanded known genres to cater to our functionality and needs.

Thanks to innovation, social media awareness, and places like Etsy, the genres within right-handed focused literate activities that once seemed so challenging (using a mouse on the right side, using those medieval left-handed scissors, just completely reconfiguring your controller for a video game) are now accessible and tailored to the left-dominant hand.

In this short graphic, I will explain various left-handed-centric tools I use for my literate activities and how these tools have changed the way I perform and feel in my body as I write and research.

As a student and someone who wants to write narratively as a career, note-taking and drafting are not only critical researching genres, but they are also literate activities that require specific tools. Tools that have long plagued lefties. . .like the dreaded notebook spiral ring. I use notebooks with spiral rings on the right side. The perforation (where you tear the page) is also on the right side. Additionally, I use notebooks with rings and perforation at the top of the notebook (like a detective's notepad), so I can disregard the ring altogether.

Figure 1: My Preferred Styles of Lefty Notebooks



These deviations from rings and perforation on the left side allow me to write more smoothly and freely, enhancing my desire to take notes and draft by hand.

Figure 2: Left Hand on Right-Handed Notebook with Pen.

Writing can be difficult. It can be a particular kind of difficult for a left-handed person to adhere to right-handed-styled notebooks. These are sold in most general stores that carry school and office supplies. It takes browsing specialty stores, novelty isles, and online avenues to buy a pack of two left-handed notebooks—and on average, it's more expensive for less paper than with standard right-handed-styled notebooks.

Assimilation is often the solution to this lack of access. Unfortunately, this means bumping into spiral rings and writing near the margins that results in messy print and crooked letters, which then turns into having to rotate your notebook about ninety degrees to compensate. And it sometimes creates an overall disgruntled attitude and dispels the energy to write. Writing by hand is an embodied experience. How your hands feel and move influences how and what you may write.

Figure 3: Ink Palm

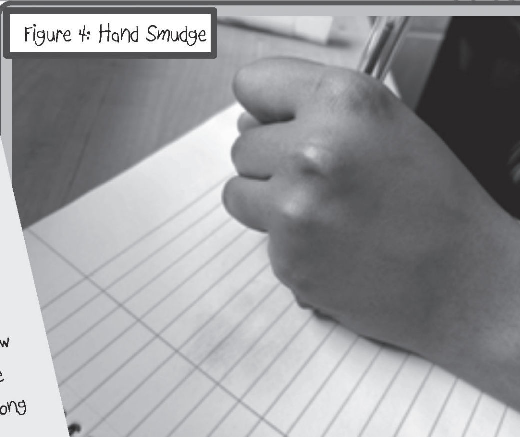
Every lefty knows about Ink Palm. The pen is wet, the spirall ring is cold, and the hand pays the price. Writing isn't only thought in your mind or written by your fingers. Your process can be stained on your skin.

When I was a kid and didn't know many of the tricks to left-handed literacies, I often found myself washing my hands or, for some reason, just feeling "messier" than my classmates after a long in-class writing session. It could have been nerves about my writing, but the evidence was usually on my palm.

And with Ink Palm comes The Smudge. As a lefty glides their writing hand across the page, so does the ink trail. This is another layer of my younger self and, even now, the feeling of being messy as a student taking notes in class lingers. Or, it lingers when writing on scratch paper or sticky notes that aren't my tailored writing tools, or when it comes to using dry-erase markers or chalk.

So much of my "pre-Google Doc" writing history can be traced through smudges: how much I wrote, how neat or sloppily I wrote (how much I cared about the print), how long the words I chose were, and how hard I squeezed my pen and pressed onto the paper —all of it was told on the page.

Figure 4: Hand Smudge



It might be a smudge, a mess, but it's also proof I was there and that my hand was related to the content on the page. It's my mark. My DNA is present.

Figure 5: Notebook Rip

A clean and crisp edge is sometimes a personal challenge for the lefty vs. notebook. Sometimes the top works better than the side.

We're conditioned to view top perforation notebooks as not "standard"—something more akin to the sticky note or notecard genres. And I think part of this is because these notebooks don't present as a "book" but more like a pad. It's not typical in the notebook genre. I'll admit, I did have this weird moment of "but I need a real notebook," and then I realized I was requesting this tool assimilate, just like I have to. But no, I'm not right-handed. I live a different literate life, and no two artifacts within any genre are precisely the same. So, I guess we embraced each other.

With the Ink Palm comes The Smudge. And sometimes, too, The Bump—the mound on the left middle finger and that painful knuckle pop that often accompanies it from years of using pencils and pens that, while just circular tubes, are designed for the right-handed individual.

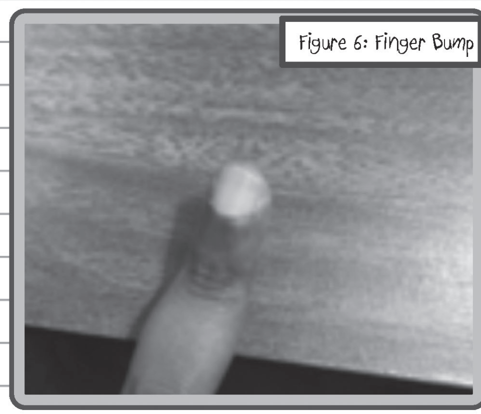


Figure 6: Finger Bump

Writing can be challenging, and it can also be uncomfortable, even painful.

I use pens designed explicitly for a left-handed individual. These pens are fast drying (no smudges), come with extra finger padding (no bumps), and curve ergonomically to the fingers (less squeezing and knocks against the spiral rings).

Figure 7: Pens! Pens! Pens!

Figure 8: The Whole Set-Up

My office desk(s) are set up for my left hand—the one I craft my life with. I'm still assimilated to the right-handed mouse and placement, but I do whatever I can to honor my dominant hand and ensure it's comfortable. It's always the star of the show.

My literate activities come with a few bumps and smudges as a lefty. Even with my tailored tools, I still encounter challenges with writing in a right-handed world. However, this has made me appreciate notetaking and drafting so much more. It's personal every time, and it makes me more aware of my body while I write and how it feels while I write.

My left hand and its literacies are the stories of my writing life.

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Instacart-ing Is Quite an Intense Literate Activity—Here's Why

Chamelia Moore

In this article, Chamelia Moore discusses the different literate activities and literacies present when working for Instacart, a grocery delivery service.

Introduction

Graduate student by day and night; professional grocery shopper in between. The latter identity is not something I readily disclose upon meeting new people. Not that I am ashamed, but being a grocery shopper via the Instacart app is something I typically save as a "fun fact" for the once-in-a-blue-moon game of Two Truths and a Lie. Truthfully, my supplemental role and placement within the gig economy remind me of a general unsettling truth of graduate student life: Making a livable wage often entails unpredictable, and arguably rewarding, sacrifices. And luckily, this one affords me very specialized types of bodily and spatial literacies that go beyond the dairy aisle of any Chicagoland supermarket.

> **Instacart** is a grocery delivery and pick-up website and app that allows subscribers to shop a variety of retailers (mostly grocery stores) through a personal shopper.

> **Gig economy** refers to an employment/labor market overly saturated by freelance, temporary, and independent contractor labor.

Before getting into that super interesting conversation on bodily and spatial literacies, I think it'd be appropriate to first unpack what I mean by "literacy," and with that, "literate activity." Both terms encompass what is entailed in the doing of an activity—whether that be baking a cake, riding the train, or ordering a drink at Starbucks. **Literacy**, particularly, focuses on the set of knowledges or skills that are necessary to do a thing—anything—and **literate activity** is a term used to broadly describe what and how people do and produce all the things they are doing and producing in the world, going "beyond our typical ideas about 'reading' and 'writing' to include the broad range of practices and processes we employ in the creation and use of a wide array of texts" (Prior, 1998). I like to think of literate activity as networks of literacies that accomplish all the things we humans seek to do . . . or pay others to do (in the case of Instacart).

Many writing and English studies scholars who talk about literate activity do so in the context of texts being produced and disseminated within and across different publics. Here, with you, I am doing something a little different as I cannot speak to the texts (if any) that are particularly produced in the world because of Instacart-ing. "Why?" you ask. The simple answer is because I have not encountered much writing outside reviews and app-specific forums. However, I can and will speak to the do-ing of Instacart, the literacies it has required of me (both bodily and spatial literacies), and how I feel about being an Instacart shopper.

How to Instacart

To work as an Instacart employee essentially means that you are grocery shopping in place of the Instacart customer you have agreed to shop for. In understanding the Instacart shopper's role as the eyes, ears, arms, and legs of a customer, the expectation is that all decisions concerning items must be made by the customer through the shopper. This happens through directives and requests communicated via the Messages or Call features on the app. If requested items are present and available in the store as indicated by the app, all is well. If not—and this happens more often than not—notifying the customer through the previously mentioned communication features must happen. Shoppers can either substitute or replace unavailable items with similar ones (with the approval of the customer) or refund the items (also at the approval or request of the customer).

> A **shift** is a commitment to working at a certain time for a certain number of hours in a particular location within your city.

Question: So, what happens after getting hired by Instacart, completing the mandatory protocol tutorials and exams, and downloading the Instacart Shopper app?

The semishort answer: Let the shopping commence! But there are steps: (1) deciding whether to pick up a shift or a batch order; (2) selecting an order to shop from what is available; (3) getting to the grocery store; (4) shopping the order and "paying" for the order; (5) driving to the customer's residence or drop-off address; and (6) delivering the order.

Below is a list of some tools and practices that will make driving and shopping way more efficient:

- Setting the GPS preference from the outset of downloading the app (the only choices are Google Maps or iMaps)
- A full tank (of gas)
- A portable charger (as the app takes up a lot of energy on my poor and ancient iPhone 6s Plus)
- A pair of comfortable shoes (for walking anywhere upwards of a mile across the grocery store)
- A bottle of water (must stay hydrated)
- A jacket/coat with pockets or a purse (a place to store the Instacart card, ID for alcohol orders, and your portable charger)

Batch orders are leftover orders or orders that have not been picked up by someone working a shift; these can be located anywhere within your city.

Online Orders

Online orders do not require the Instacart shopper to use their Instacart debit card.

Delivery Options

Customers have a "Leave at the door" or "Hand to" option for delivery. Both require the Instacart shopper to safely park their vehicle nearby and leave it unattended to physically deliver the order.

Bringing It Back In

Out of the six processes of Instacart-ing, I want to focus on the literacies involved in the third and fourth: that is, in getting to the grocery store and shopping the order; the bulk of my bodily and spatial literacies gained from Instacart-ing comes from these two steps. Very quickly: What do I mean by bodily and spatial literacies? When I discuss **bodily literacies**, I am getting at the ways in which my body understands or is made to understand how to accomplish different tasks and activities. When I talk about my bodily literacy of Instacart-ing, I am directly speaking to the things my body has had to learn in order to do Instacart. What I have

Order Cost

Orders can range from five dollars to around sixty dollars, depending on travel, distance, the number of items, and estimated physical labor. Orders can be "Full" or "Delivery only."

Full: The Instacart shopper both shops for and delivers the order.

Delivery only: The Instacart shopper doesn't do the shopping themselves but rather picks up the pre-packaged order from a designated area in the grocery store and delivers it.

described here is what geographer Diana Sinton (2014, p. 24) understands as "spatial thinking," that is, "the ability to visualize and interpret location, distance, direction, relationships, change, and movement over space." My understanding of spatial literacies as a larger and more encompassing extension of spatial thinking is simply put as this: **Spatial literacies** are the literacies my body has had to learn in navigating different spaces. In this context, "different spaces" refers to grocery stores, roads, highways, interstates, and the different geographies of cities and towns. Even though I distinguish the type of learning and literacy that is required of the body in completing activities from the type of learning and literacy that is required of the body when moving about the world, the two are not necessarily independent or separate from each other. I say this because the literate activity of Instacart-ing cannot be fully grasped without an understanding that the body in particular spaces has to learn and do extremely specialized things. So, what are the Instacart-ing bodily and spatial literacies I possess that were not as developed prior to downloading the app?

- **Grocery store literacies:** I may be the first one to coin this, but "grocery store literacies" are particular bits of knowledge about how grocery stores are set up. This includes the following: understanding the layouts and floor plans of grocery stores; knowing where items are located based on how they are categorized, the season, and their popularity; the likelihood of certain items being stocked based on the geographic location of the grocery store; the days of the week and times of day grocery stores are most populated; and the average number of employees working at a time.

    Shopper's Note: The only way this literacy can come about is when a person is physically in a grocery store and actively exploring it. Over time, the body will remember where and how far items are from each other, faster routes or paths across sections of a store, and the items to prioritize on a shopping list based on location in the store. From my experience, the most difficult grocery stores to learn have frequent stock and inventory changes, have more specialty or niche items, and are generally larger in size.

- **App literacies:** The Instacart app attempts to help shoppers locate items more quickly by organizing the grocery list by food category. Recently, the app has also begun listing items according to aisle and/or section within the store. Physically pressing "start shopping" once at the store will automatically generate a grocery list that is organized in these ways. In short, these organization or list features are the app's attempt to help the shopper learn certain grocery store literacies (i.e., locating food items). One thing to note is that not every grocery store will have their items organized by aisle on the app—meaning, stores can have different interfaces on the app that allow for certain literacies to be acquired (or not). A shopper would only know this by picking up orders from a variety of stores. If a shopper only selects orders from a store like Fresh Thyme, which does not group items according to aisle, they would never know it might be easier to complete an order from a store that does—like Kroger or Jewel. This feature—food aisle listing—impacts the time it takes to complete orders, which is HUGE: the less time it takes to complete orders, the more you can work.

> **Shopper's Note:** Currently, Food 4 Less, Jewel, Kroger, and Aldi are the only grocery stores that have food aisle listing as a part of their interface on Instacart.

- **GPS/land literacies:** This set of literacies refers to the learning of a particular geography, in my case, having specific geographical knowledge of Chicago and Chicagoland—and now, Bloomington-Normal. In Instacart-ing discourse, it is not only about the physical land but also where grocery stores are in relation to each other and where they are likely to appear in each community.

> **Shopper's Note:** This literacy can also (typically) only come about from actually moving around (physically) in and across space. Over time, landmarks, street names, interstate signs, and other visual markers of location are recognized to the point of not needing a GPS. In order to acquire this literacy, my body had to acclimate to driving in a way that allowed me to also observe the land (which usually entailed driving a bit more slowly), and for a total of four to six hours per shift. It also requires being attentive to individual community layouts (i.e., the location of shopping centers and plazas in relation to residential neighborhoods, the number of fast-food chains populating a major street, the distance to and from a major highway/road/interstate, etc.).

Learning the Locations

This saves battery life on my iPhone while using the Instacart app and allows me to travel more quickly through the City of Chicago and surrounding areas.

- **Parking and double-parking literacies**: After shopping and driving to the delivery address, the order must be physically delivered. There is no way to avoid not leaving the car unless the customer comes directly to you—which has happened to me probably three times in my Instacart-ing life. To complete this final step, the car must be parked temporarily and (hopefully) legally, and this is harder than you might think.

Shopper's Note: Knowing how to park as someone who delivers food is essential for obvious reasons, but this literacy in many ways ties into the former. It is not just a matter of knowing how to park a car—knowing where to park is the key. In Chicago, most residences are located in densely populated areas, and many are located on main streets. Having a parking and double-parking literacy includes having an eye for open parking spaces, knowing the location of free parking, knowing nearby lots to park, and being double-parked for no more than three minutes (if you take the chance, which I usually do). In Bloomington-Normal, I typically do not have to concern myself with parking because most residences have parking lots or plenty of parking in front.

The Larger Picture

So, what of the grocery store, land, and parking literacies? How do these things help me outside the context of Instacart-ing? When I initially set out to be an Instacart shopper, it did not occur to me that I would need to build a working knowledge of Chicago and Chicagoland geographies, or that I would become as knowledgeable of a grocery store's layout as an employee. I thought of it quite superficially, that I would simply just go to the store and shop. But in retrospect, I realize that acquiring these bodily and spatial literacies through Instacart-ing has allowed me to understand that the experiences I deem as mundane, such as shopping, actually invoke hyperspecific actions, processes, and memories in my body. And that these things are tangible and traceable because they are a part of me in that they are a part of how I move about and do things in the world. I am thinking of my Instacart-ing literacies as also **bodily memories**, or memories that my body physically holds (Solberg, n.d.). My Instacart-ing memories, even while doing other activities (but especially shopping), influence how I both move and feel in a space (especially grocery stores). The term Bio Mapping comes to mind when I think about how my body reacts to and processes being in a grocery store both for personal and work purposes. **Bio Mapping**, which has also been used interchangeably with emotion mapping, is defined as a "methodology

Bio Mapping

Christian Nold—the researcher and inventor who really pioneered Bio Mapping as a re-exploration of space and land through the lens of emotion—measures emotional responses to space through a device that he invented, which records a person's Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) in relation to geographical location. Essentially, mapping emotion is tracing the emotional arousal of a person as they move across space (Barnett, 2012; Nold, n.d.).

and tool" for recording or "visualizing" emotional responses to the environment (Nold, n.d.).

Despite never measuring my emotional responses to a space through a tool—I have never seen a numerical measurement of my emotion across space, as I would if I were participating in a formal Bio Mapping study—I can feel the visceral, more physiological reactions in my body as I travel across Chicago or Bloomington-Normal for an Instacart order or whenever I need to be physically inside of a grocery store. The bodily changes I observe include increased heart rate (sometimes upon accepting an order—but definitely when a requested item is taking more time to find), higher body temperature, fluctuations in energy levels (a burst of energy at the onset of entering the grocery store, lower energy in frozen food aisles and check-out lines, and higher energy en route to the delivery address), increased levels of serotonin when finding items quickly and easily, and lack of appetite.

Even though all these physiological responses to getting and completing an Instacart order do not follow me across all grocery stores or when I am entering grocery stores as a consumer, many of them do. To list a few:

- I notice heart rate and appetite changes the most when I am shopping in grocery stores for myself.
- I do not typically feel hungry while inside grocery stores anymore. I am thinking my body has learned that hunger is a type of distraction, even though it knows suppressing the hunger response for too long is detrimental to my health.
- The grocery stores wherein I have had more negative experiences in finding items are also more avoided when I am not working.
- Knowing my likelihood of finding certain items in grocery stores across the city allows me to be more intentional about where I go.
- I receive a confidence boost when shopping quickly (beating my current completion times).
- I feel excitement when finding new items; I will usually make a mental note of new products to sample or buy for myself if I see multiple customers ordering them.

Learning grocery store literacies has also made me more knowledgeable about food in general—perhaps I have a more developed **food literacy**? This comes from understanding why food items are placed in particular locations, and I have found that food placements make the most sense to me when I know the relationships between different foods and food groups. For

A Note on Ingredients

Sesame seed paste is also perishable, but the way it is stored allows it to have a much longer shelf life than the other major components of hummus (garlic and lemon).

example, when I received an order that included tahini, in order to locate it, I needed to know what tahini actually is. This seems quite obvious, but for me, tahini was a food item I thought I understood from simply hearing it in conversations about hummus. I thought I knew what tahini was via its proximity to hummus, as it is a main ingredient. However, hummus and tahini are not similar even though one is made from the other. Tahini is essentially sesame seed paste or dense oil, and hummus is a combination of chickpeas, tahini, garlic, lemon juice, and spices. Hummus is stored very differently than its major ingredient, typically in a refrigerator as it also includes fresh, perishable ingredients. Tahini is located with other seed and seed-based pastes and products, so it can typically be found wherever peanut butter is located (and even if the grocery store has an International Aisle, it will likely be placed there).

My journey in locating tahini for the first time for an Instacart order made me more cognizant of how I was understanding food—that I actually did not know what certain foods are or how they are made. I had to really ask myself "What is this?" and question if there had ever been a time in my life (beyond my initial learning of the food groups in elementary school) where I had to explicitly define a food or know the basic constitution of a dish. I realized that obtaining a recipe or cooking a meal alone does not force a person to know the essence of an ingredient or why certain ingredients can make sense together. And I think coming to this awareness has made my cooking experiences more meaningful, or at least more intentional.

In Closing

Congratulations on making it to the end. I could go on about Instacart for what seems like forever, but I will stop here. I think this is how every literate activity feels when you dive into all of the different literacies that make it possible. There is a lot to be understood in unpacking how the body learns and adapts to new spaces, expectations, technologies, and environments over time—and the emotional responses that come along with that. For me, even the process of getting to a particular place for an order resulted in bodily and spatial literacies that made my body have certain memories. These memories inform the experiences and emotional responses I have in spaces regardless of the context. You can see my "aha moments" about literate activity in analyzing Instacart-ing as one, but I think my concluding takeaway is this: being able to trace where my literacies come from is a huge part of understanding literate activity and ultimately coming to an appreciation of the ones (or at least the one) I actively engage in on a regular basis. So now I'm curious, do you (yes, you) have an Instacart-like literate activity that changed the way you experience super mundane tasks like shopping? I just know that nothing is ever as simple as it seems . . . and I wouldn't have it any other way.

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Would You Drink This? The Literacies of Evaluating Risk

Joyce R. Walker

In this article, Joyce R. Walker tries to research how humans learn to assess risk but comes to the conclusion that building risk assessment literacies is not really something you can memorize or make a step-by-step list for. Instead, we have to wrestle with our brains—learn how to recognize some of our unconscious practices, use research as part of our decision-making, and be more aware of our emotional biases. And yeah, that's pretty much what being a human and trying to learn and use complex literacies in a complex world is like.

INTRODUCTION

One day last spring, in a class I was teaching, folks were joking around about a random water bottle that had been sitting in our classroom since the beginning of the semester. They were asking everyone, "How much money would it take for you to drink out of this water bottle?"[1] We asked everyone, and they gave answers that ranged from $10.00 to $100,000.00. We were really just goofing around before class, but I got all "I can make a *Grassroots* article about anything," and so I suggested that this was, in fact, a conversation about **risk assessment literacies**, and would make a good *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* article about how humans make decisions in situations that involve risk.

1. I would like to thank all of the students in ENG 239 (Spring 2022) for their inspiration, and in particular Izzy Foltz, whose interest in the water bottle is the origin story for this article, and Kayleen Haile, who took a sample of the liquid in question to her father, Dennis Haile, who is the operations supervisor at Wheaton Sanitary District in Wheaton, Illinois.

Risk Assessment Literacies and Why They Matter

Literate activity research, which is the kind of work we do in the *Grassroots* journal, focuses on the full range of resources people use to do stuff like (a) learn new things; (b) interact with other humans, genres, texts, and tools; (c) make texts that go out into the world; and (d) better understand how these complicated systems of learning, interacting, and meaning-making work.

In writing about my learning process related to risk assessment, I'm not only "uptaking" new information, I'm trying to create a framework for future action and future communications about risk.

And so, this article on risk assessment was born. If you're interested, you can also read the comic I made about the whole "Would you drink from this water bottle?" discussion, which tries to apply some of the risk assessment literacies I've gained through my research.

EXPANSIVE AND UNCONCIOUS LITERACIES

My writing research often focuses on what keeps people going when they are trying to learn something new—the sets of activities, emotions, tools, and interactions that we go through and how we decide to keep going when it becomes difficult or confusing or we're not sure what steps to take next. And that idea is how I understand what I'm doing in this article, where the idea of acquiring risk assessment literacies describes what I've done as I've tried to learn how to think about risk and how to communicate what I know with others.

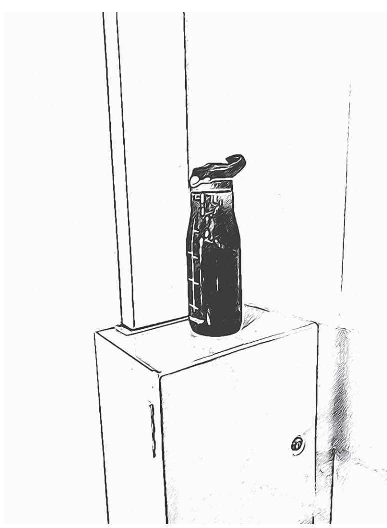

Figure 1: The sketchy water bottle in question.

I think the pandemic has really made all of us much more aware of how differently people can assess risk. For one person, the vaccine is something to be frightened about; for another, it's people not wearing masks; and for still others, it's how to keep as safe as possible in situations (at work, with family, etc.) when face-to-face interactions are necessary. Facing new risks—daily, often with a sense that we didn't have enough information to choose wisely—was stressful for everyone, and people chose *really* diverse ways of dealing with it.

You'll find other articles in the *Grassroots* journal that ask questions about how people learn new kinds of things, how different kinds of genres evolve over time, and even how people become part of groups of other humans who engage in activities and text-making regarding a particular subject or text. One of my current favorite examples of this is an article by Charley Koenig, "'I Should Quit, Right?' And Other Things I've Said While (Trying) to Learn to Play Chess," where she discusses the different kinds of activities and tools involved in her efforts to learn how to play chess (issue 13.1, Fall 2022). In my case, I'm trying to learn to assess risk, and I ran into my own difficulties in this process.

For example, I first had to acknowledge that humans have really personalized ways of making and doing and learning in the world. While risk assessment strategies can be considered a set of **literacies** (that is, they are knowledge-tools that people use), they are also **expansive literacies**—that is, reading and writing may be included, but all kinds of other ways of knowing (emotions, social interactions, visual and aural learning, etc.) are also included. In addition, it turns out that risk literacies are particularly personal, so it's not like you could write out a step-by-step guide for assessing all risks that everyone could follow. We evolve these literacies based on our emotions; our social interactions and experiences; and the patterns of thinking, communicating, and producing that emerge from all of that knowledge and experience. And, it's important to note, a lot of these complicated literacies are not entirely or explicitly conscious.

Expansive Literacies

"Expansive conceptions of literacy demonstrate the rich, complex, and diverse ways people communicate and make meaning. They also help us to understand literacy as a system of skills that encompass traditional reading and writing as well as other ways of interacting with the world that affect how we make sense of ourselves, others, and society at large."

—Kelly C. Johnston, Faculty blog, Baylor University School of Education.

And that brings me to my second difficulty with learning to assess risk. Many of our everyday literacies (including how we assess risk) are *unconscious*. This means that when we make decisions about risk, we're not only using personalized literacies, we're also using cognitive/emotional tools (inside of our brain/bodies) that we're not consciously aware of.

And the final problem (for me, as the author of this article) is that I don't know much about risk assessment. I'm not an expert talking to non-experts; I'm just a person who wants to understand how people assess risk and what tools I could use to assess risks I might face in the future.

RISK ASSESSMENT LITERACIES

Tools for Understanding Risk and Making Choices About It

Where to Start?

Well, as a non-expert, I started in the classic location for finding out about stuff: I didn't ask SIRI, but I did ask Google. A quick first search led me to a bunch of articles and websites about "risk assessment" for companies, public health agencies, and so on. But my goal was trying to understand how *individuals* assess risk, so I kept searching. Kind of surprisingly, the first source I found that seemed really useful for individuals trying to assess risk was an episode of a podcast created for climbers called "Analyzing Risk." It was kind of funny, because, for me, "climbing up on tall things" is an activity that I would probably be as excited about as I would be to drink from that sketchy water bottle (see the introduction of this article and the comic that follows).

Ummmm . . . nope.

But in a way, it makes sense. Climbing is definitely riskier than many daily activities, so people who climb need to learn to be conscious about their risk assessment, even as they take risks many of us would not. So the ideas presented in that podcast episode seemed like a good place to start in developing basic risk assessment literacies. What I gleaned from this research is summarized next.

Risk and Hazard Identification

When discussing risk, a **hazard** is something that is constant—such as if you have a loose step on a staircase. Until you fix it, that step could injure someone who stepped on it. A **risk** is the likelihood of something bad happening, such as the loose step making someone fall down the stairs.

Risk Characterization: Probability and Consequence

Probability and **consequence** are important aspects of risk assessment, because when a person is assessing a risk, they often have to differentiate between the possible bad thing that could happen vs. the likelihood that the bad thing would actually happen and how bad the bad thing would be. So, for example, if the only people using the staircase with the loose step are people who *know* the loose step is there, then the likelihood of the bad thing (someone falling) is less than if the stairs are used regularly by folks who are unaware of the loose step. The consequence of those two scenarios is the same (someone falling down the stairs), but the probability of that consequence is different. However, the consequences could also range in severity, from slight to serious injury or even death.

Risk Analysis

Life is complicated, and lots of daily activities have different kinds of risks (driving a car, climbing the stairs), as do activities we choose to engage in even though there are known risks (like smoking cigarettes). So, individual risk assessment can be difficult, because you don't always have access to all the information you might need.

Risk Control

Once we've made an analysis of a particular hazard or potential risk, there are sometimes decisions we can make that help to **mitigate the risk**, or to reduce the consequences of a more serious result. For example, if I put a "DANGER" sign at the top and bottom of the staircase with the loose step and painted "LOOSE STEP" on the step, these actions wouldn't eliminate the hazard, but they might mitigate the risk of serious consequences . . . for most people. Except people who are in a hurry. Or people who speak and read languages besides English. Or people whose legs are short enough that they can't reach to step over the loose step. When people are trying to mitigate the impact of a risk on others, the process can mean trying to step outside of one's basic instincts to consider multiple ways to mitigate the risk for different kinds of people ("Analyzing Risk"; "Risk Analysis and Risk Management").

RISK AND EMOTIONS

In the Moment

According to the authors of an article called "Risk as Feelings," "gut feelings experienced at the moment of making a decision . . . can play a critical role in the choice one eventually makes" (Loewenstein et al. 281). Informed research and logical analysis are less important in these moments. In addition, our emotions and process of storing memories can also impact decisions we make about risk.

Risk and Fear

Apparently, we're not all that good at identifying which things might be risky for us, and this is especially true when we need to make a decision about a risk that we have strong feelings about—especially negative feelings. Psychologist Paul Slovic, when interviewed on an episode of the *Hidden Brain* podcast I listened to, said, "our 'feeling system' doesn't do multiplication" ("Afraid of the Wrong Things"). What he meant was that when assessing a risk where the probability that something *bad* will happen is above zero,

Figure 2: A picture of my own eye expressing a fear response.

and we have some strong emotion about that (see above for my feelings about climbing up on tall things), or we perceive the outcome as really negative (in the *Hidden Brain* podcast, an example they gave was being attacked by a shark), our emotions end up overpowering our ability to make objective calculations about the risk.

Risk and Memory

Slovic also explains that "we judge the frequency or the probability of something by how easy it is to imagine it happening or to remember it happening in the past" ("Afraid of the Wrong Things"). This is true for both positive and negative outcomes. This means that emotions associated with our past experiences—but also with stories we might have heard or seen or read—can impact our ability to accurately assess the likelihood of the risk. So . . .

A Lot of Media Exposure about Shark Attacks

=>

How Dangerous We Think Sharks Are

According to Slovic, "something that's a very dramatic event . . . will lead us to have a sense that this thing is frequent or likely, when in fact, statistically, it's very unlikely" ("Afraid of the Wrong Things"). Basically, the level of emotional involvement in imagining or remembering a risk event is much more powerful than our ability to calculate actual risk.

AND OUR BRAINS ARE BAD AT MATH

Even if we're trying to be careful to assess a particular risk, and we're trying to focus on how our emotions impact our decision-making, humans can still struggle with risk assessment because our brains aren't great at calculating how the likelihood of some risks can increase over time. According to the *Hidden Brain* podcast episode I listened to, humans' inability to accurately calculate risk regarding **cumulative assessments** (dangers that build

Figure 3: Getting to the moon on a stack of folded paper ("Afraid of the Wrong Things").

up over time, like pollution or climate change or infectious diseases like COVID-19) and probabilities like **exponential growth** can lead people to ignore the increased likelihood of certain risks ("Afraid of the Wrong Things"). The question and answer above are an example of this (Figure 3). If you ask most people how many times they think you would need to fold a piece of a paper in order to get a thickness that would be able to reach the moon, they will instinctively guess a really high number. But the actual number is forty-five—or forty-two, my second source offered a slightly lower number (Siegel). Slovic says that this is because, when things increase exponentially, the cumulative results increase really fast (Figure 4).

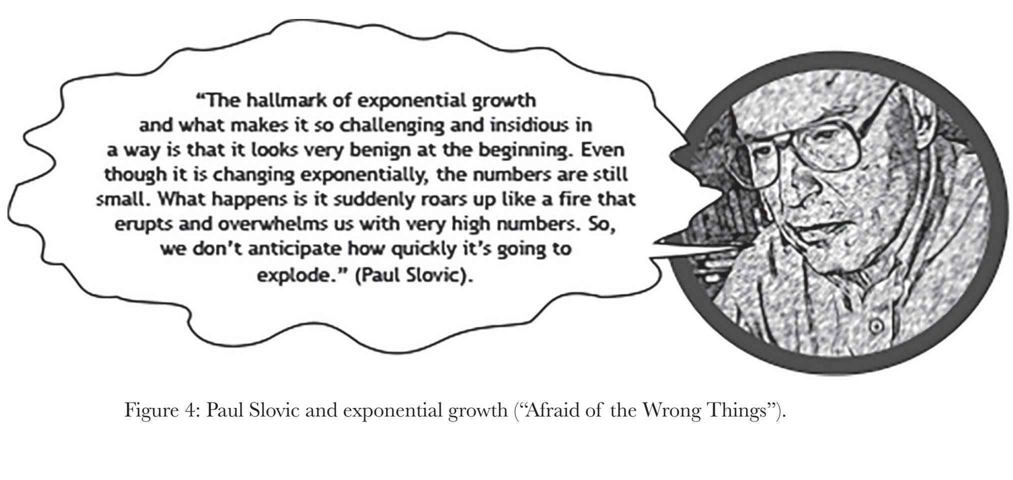

Figure 4: Paul Slovic and exponential growth ("Afraid of the Wrong Things").

IT'S RISKY BUT I'LL BE OK

Control and Optimism Bias In Assessing Risk

I'll Be OK (the Optimism Bias)

Apparently, we also struggle to apply the same standards about risk to ourselves and to others. According to Tali Sharot, a cognitive neuroscientist, most people have a tendency to be more responsive to facts that confirm their positive expectations.

Sharot conducted a study where they asked people to estimate their likelihood of getting cancer, and then she told them the average likelihood of that thing actually happening (say, thirty percent). What they found was that, if people had guessed something like fifteen percent, hearing a higher percentage didn't really change their beliefs. But if the percentage of the bad thing happening (cancer) was lower than their estimate, people revised their estimate downward, to accommodate the good news. The idea behind this **optimism bias** is that humans (generally) tend to be optimistic about themselves (their competence, their abilities) compared to other people (Figure 5). And this bias can also extend to risk.

Figure 5: The optimism bias in action.

I'll Be OK if I'm in Control

And again, according to the *Hidden Brain* podcast I listened to, "People were willing to accept far greater risks for activities that they *chose* over activities that did not involve personal choice. They accepted a higher level of risk for, say, skiing or bungee jumping, but found a similar level of risk unacceptable when it came to things like building safety or the use of preservatives in food" ("Afraid of the Wrong Things").

According to Shankar Vedantam, host of the *Hidden Brain* podcast, the notion of personal control may "help us to understand why some people say they are not worried about becoming ill with the COVID-19 virus but are worried about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine. You feel you have control when you go to a restaurant. You convince yourself the risk of the virus is small. But you don't have control over how a vaccine is made. You have to trust the results of studies conducted by scientists whom you will never meet" ("Afraid of the Wrong Things").

THIS IS HOPELESS, RIGHT?

Are There Ways to Get Better at Assessing Risk?

A lot of what I read made me feel like it was kind of hopeless to try to build better risk assessment literacies. So much of our decision-making is unconscious and impacted by our experience and environments in ways we don't realize. So even being more literate about risk—that is, knowing more about how human brains assess risk—doesn't necessarily mean that I'll get better at assessing risk in specific situations, if by *better* I mean that I will somehow become able to assess risk in completely conscious, unbiased ways. Additionally, our emotional biases can cause us to be careless about risk (optimism bias) but also to be risk averse (if we have fear and anxiety about the risk). So, basically, when our emotions get involved, we're at risk of being unable to assess our risk (sigh).

Through doing this research, I realized that human risk assessment is probably actually more related to our writing practices and literate activities that I first thought. I mean, think about the last time an instructor or someone in charge of your work asked you to do something "risky" with your writing (think trying a new genre, doing different kinds of research, creating something that is multimodal, or even something as simple making your writing longer or more complex). I think I could argue that the fear/anxiety people experience in this moment often matches up pretty well with how people assess risk more generally:

- Fear/anxiety makes the risk seem riskier by accentuating the bad thing that might happen if it goes wrong.
- Or, if we are too confident that we know what we're doing, we might mentally erase the possibility that things will go wrong at all. And then we're surprised (and really frustrated) when we get negative feedback.
- In the moment, we're pretty bad at calculating the actual risk (of say, getting a poor grade or having our writing critiqued), so we often depend on emotions to make our decisions about how adventurous we're willing to be in our writing.

So yeah. My risk literacies may not always help me to assess risk accurately. But I figure that one thing I can do is try to be more conscious about using *research* to assess risk while also trying to be more aware of how my emotions and immediate reactions are impacting my decisions. And this research has taught me that as I try to get to know my brain a little better, I can sometimes see (and possibly intervene in) my unconscious risk assessment processes by learning how they work.

As Dan Ariely, Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Economics, says, "We understand our [physical] limitations, and we build around them. I think that if we understood our cognitive limitations in the same way we understand our physical limitations . . . we could design a better world."

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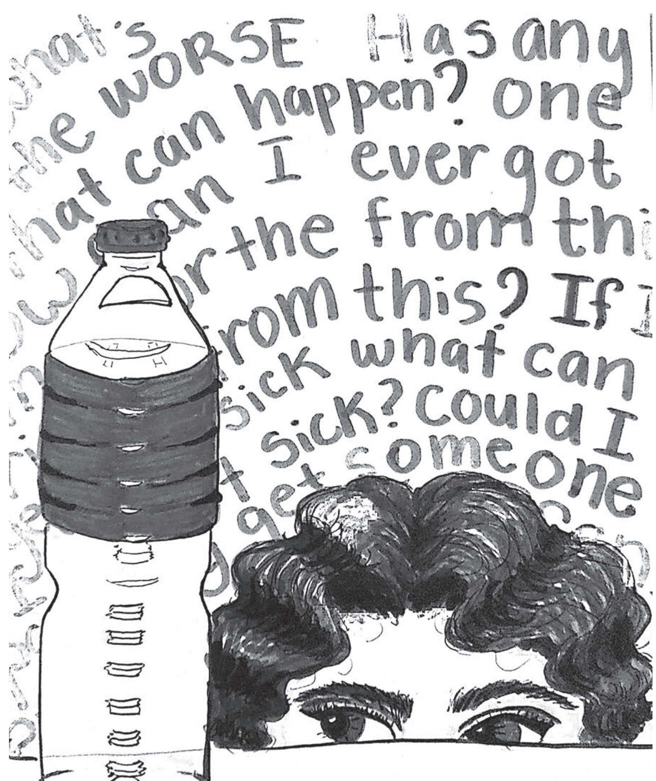
Notes



WORSE Has any
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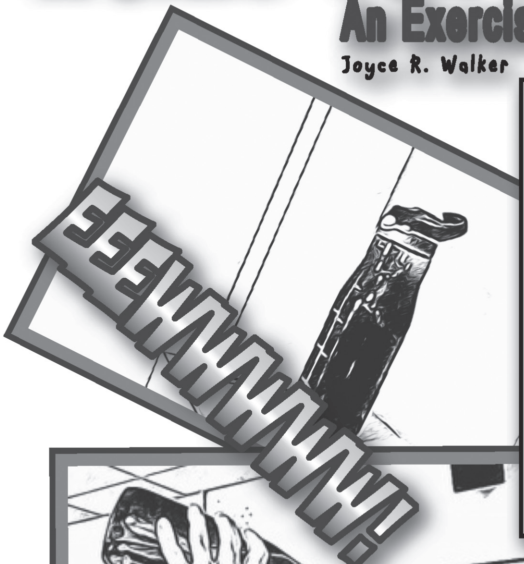
WOULD YOU DRINK THIS?

An Exercise in Risk Assessment

Joyce R. Walker

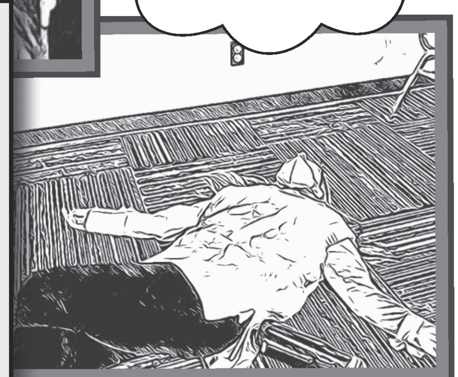


This water bottle had been sitting, lonely, in the corner of a classroom in Stevenson Hall, at Illinois State University, for more than a semester. One day, as we waited for class to start, someone (thanks Izzy!) asked the question, “How much money would it take for you to drink from this water bottle?”

After a lot of “EEEEEEWWWW” noises, we came up with amounts that ranged from $10 to $100,000. But that conversation really made me think…

How do we make decisions about the risks we’re willing to take, and the rewards we are willing to take them for? What kinds of literacies are involved in this decision-making?

Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, reportedly once said, “The biggest risk is not taking any risk. In a world that’s changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks” (Tobak). Great, but I’m not sure Zuckerberg would consider drinking from a bacterially suspect water bottle as a solid risk-taking strategy. Based on the research I did on risk assessment literacies, I decided to try to realistically assess the risk involved in what I’ll call “The Suspect Water Bottle Challenge.”

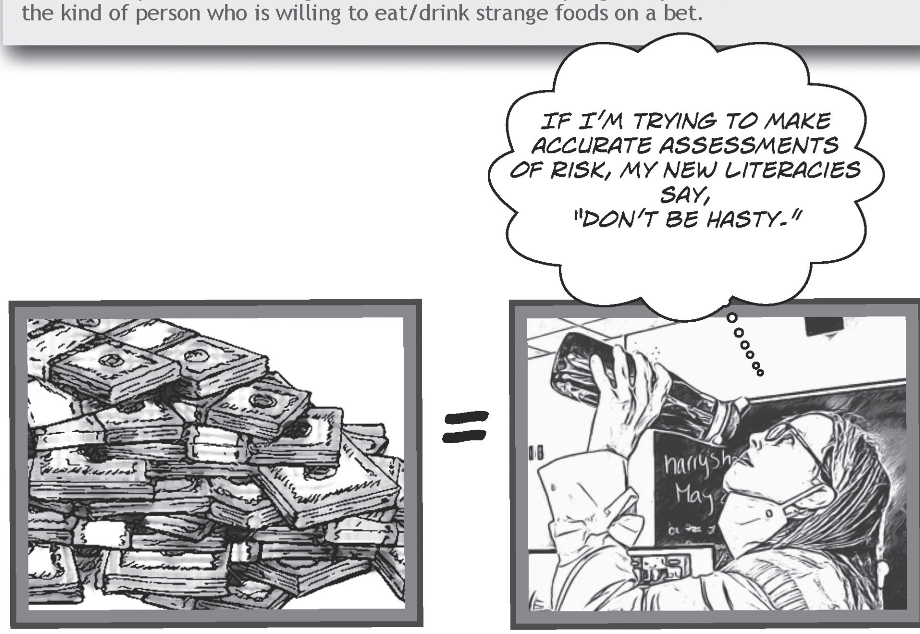


RISK ASSESSMENT LITERACIES

In the article that precedes this comic, I offered a summary of my acquisition of new literacies about **risk assessment** (as well as the difficulties in accurately assessing risk). So here, I'd like to use that information to consider my own decision-making about the sketchy water bottle. You can check out the preceding article for details and citations, if you want to learn more.

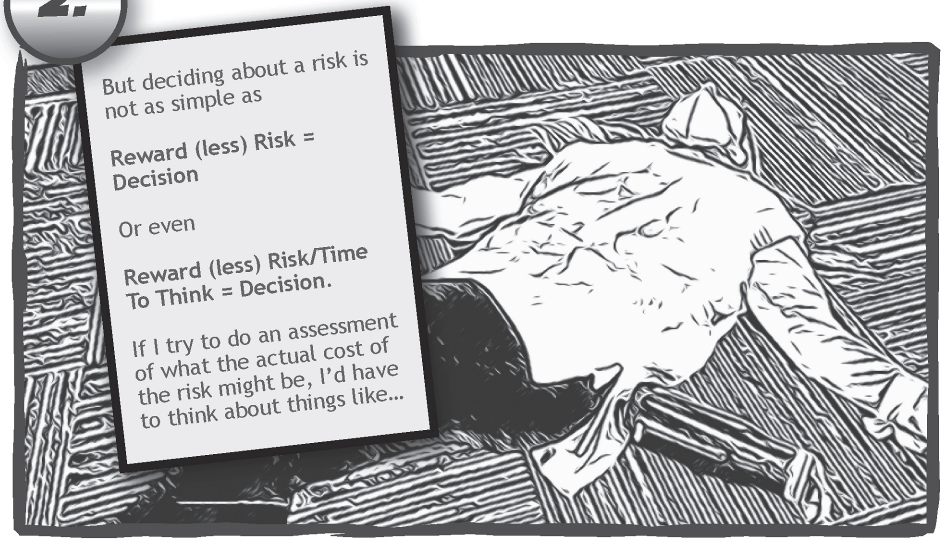
1. Decide Right NOW! (not)

Apparently, human brains have what amounts to "quick-twitch" systems for assessing immediate risk. So my new literacies tell me that if I make a decision quickly I'm likely to be more persuaded by a sense of immediate reward, or emotional connection. This means that if someone offered me a stack of money (in the moment) I might be more likely to say, "what the heck?" and go for it. But since no one in our classroom was actually offering cash, my response of "Eeeeeewwwwww!" was probably going to influence my decision-making the most. I am not really a germaphobe, but I'm also not the kind of person who is willing to eat/drink strange foods on a bet.



RISK ASSESSMENT LITERACIES

2. Risk Characterization: What's at Stake?



Risk Identification, Risk Characterization, and Risk Analysis

The climber podcast I referenced in the preceding article points out some basic aspects of risk assessment. So let's use them to look at this particular risk:

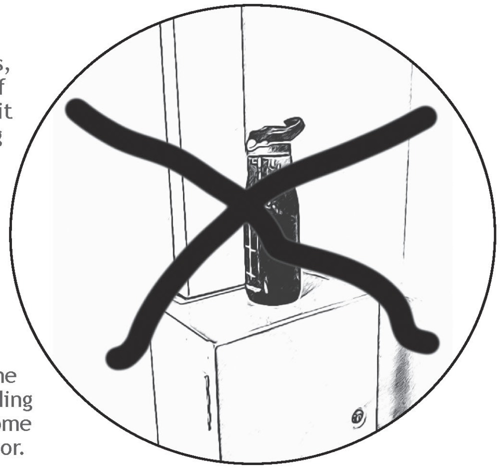
Risk Identification: Well, clearly, getting sick is the risk we're talking about here!

Risk Characterization means thinking about the possible negative outcomes of the situation, along with the likelihood those negative outcomes will be severe. I would probably not become immediately seriously ill, but according to this site I found, even drinking from your own water bottle (if you leave water sitting in it and don't clean it) can give you symptoms similar to food poisoning! And I really tried, but I couldn't even find a site that discussed the risks of drinking from a random water bottle that you found sitting in a classroom, because apparently, that's such a terrible idea that news outlets don't even bother to warn you about how risky it is.

IS YOUR WATER BOTTLE MAKING YOU SICK?

RISK ASSESSMENT LITERACIES

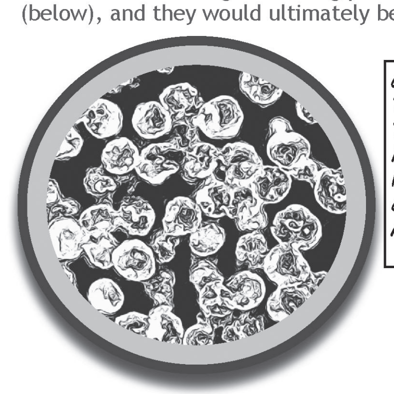
3. Doing the Research vs. Feeling the Feels



In the interests of accurate risk assessment, one of the folks in the class, Kayleen Haile, actually took a sample of the water from the water bottle (BTW, it was pretty alarming, with many floating things in it).

Her father, Dennis Haile, who is the Operations Supervisor at the Wheaton Sanitary District, looked at our sample under a microscope. His response, relayed through Kayleen, was that although he could not use work equipment to do a detailed analysis, he definitely recommended saying NO to the Suspect Water Bottle Challenge. According to him, "a person could very likely become sick" from engaging in such risky behavior.

But if I'm entirely honest here, which I intend to be, there was actually **NO WAY** I would have considered taking this challenge, even when I imagine a scenario where a person was indeed willing to pay me $100,000.00 (which was the amount I volunteered in the class discussion). Perhaps, as was described in the *Hidden Brain* podcast I discussed in my article, and in the TED talk by Dan Ariely, I have just read too many scary stories about food poisoning, or people dying from attacks by brain eating bacteria. My fears related to the possible negative consequences are so strong that, even if the research revealed that it might be safe, AND someone approached me with this challenge and a big pile of actual money, I would still picture these folks (below), and they would ultimately be the deciders.



CARTOON IMAGE OF THE VILLAINS OF THIS STORY: NAEGLERIA FOWLERI. AND A QR CODE TO A CDC ARTICLE ABOUT IT.

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Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*

GWRJ Editors

Our Mission Statement

The *GWRJ* is dedicated to publishing articles **and other compositions** by writers and scholars whose work investigates the practices of people writing (and acting) in different writing situations using a variety of different genres. **As we enter our second decade of publication, we expect to develop and put out calls for new genres for the journal that are multimodal in nature or shorter than an average article. If you have a genre or project you would like to propose, please E-mail us with your suggestion.** We encourage both individuals and groups to submit work that studies and explores the different ways that writers learn how to write in different genres and settings—not just within the boundaries of academia, but in all kinds of settings in which writing happens.

We identify "writing research" as any type of composition that endeavors to uncover new information about how people work with writing or how writing works, which means a wide range of techniques and styles of writing might be applicable. For example, a first-person narrative, an informal conversation about writing, a formal study of writing, or even an artistic production could all be useful techniques for developing a *GWRJ* article. Accepted articles will be informed by either primary research into writing behaviors and activities and/or scholarship in the field of writing studies that addresses theories of how people learn to compose in different situations.

General Information

Submissions

Articles can be submitted to the *GWRJ* at any time. However, it may take time and a couple of rounds of revision before an article is ready to be published. Please contact the managing editor at grassrootswriting@gmail.com with queries about possible submissions.

Queries and Drafts

The *GWRJ* has a strong commitment to working with interested authors to help them prepare for publication, so if you think you have a good idea but are not sure how to proceed, please contact us. One of our editorial staff will be happy to work with you one-on-one to develop your idea and/or article.

Honoraria

The *GWRJ* offers an honorarium of $50.00 for each article published in a print issue of the *GWRJ*.

Style and Tone

Because we encourage so many different kinds of textual production and research in the *GWRJ*, issues of appropriate style and tone can be complicated. However, we can offer the following basic style criteria for authors to consider:

1. The readership of the *GWRJ* is writers. It is not "students," even though the journal is used by writing instructors and students. (The *GWRJ* remains the primary text for Writing Program courses at Illinois State University, and it is used by teachers and students in other programs as well.) *GWRJ* articles should attempt to provide valuable content to writers who are engaged in the activity of "learning how to learn about" genres.

2. "Teacher narratives" are not acceptable as *GWRJ* articles. We are interested in material that looks at literate activities from the position of a "writer" or a "researcher," but articles that discuss ways to "teach" people about writing are not appropriate for this journal.

3. Language and style that is overly formal or "academic" may be unappealing to our readers.

4. A tone that situates the author as a "master" writer is often problematic. (We call these "success narratives," which are often how-to type articles in which the focus is on the author's learned expertise.) Authors should remember that no one "learns" a genre completely or in a completely simple way. While writers (especially of first-person narratives) may write about successes, they need to complicate the genres with which they are working.

5. Tone or content that situates the reader as a certain kind of writer (whether as a master or novice) with shared experiences can be

problematic because the readership of the journal constitutes a wide variety of writers with different writing abilities and experiences.

6. Whenever possible, articles should make use of published research about writing practices, but the research should be incorporated into the text in a relevant and accessible way so that readers who are not used to reading scholarly research can still benefit from the references.
7. Articles should be as specific as possible about the genre or set of writing activities they are studying. Generalized studies or discussions of "writing" are not encouraged. Additionally, examples of "writing-in-progress" are always encouraged and are often necessary for articles to be useful to our readers.

Media, Mode, and Copyright Issues

The *GWRJ* can publish both visual and digital texts. We encourage multimodal texts, including still images, audio, video, and hypertexts. However, authors working with these technologies need to be careful about copyright issues as we cannot publish any kinds of materials that may result in copyright infringement. We can sometimes seek copyright permissions, but in the case of materials such as works of art or graphics/images owned by large companies, this is often not possible. This is true for print-based articles that use images as well. We can, however, include materials that are covered by fair use; see *https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html* for fair use guidelines.

Also, video/audio of research subjects can require special kinds of permission processes, so you should contact the *GWRJ* editors before beginning this kind of work. Research using subjects who are considered "protected" populations (people under eighteen and medical patients covered by HIPPA, among others) are not acceptable for *GWRJ* articles unless the author has received approval from Illinois State University or another institution to conduct research with human subjects.

Researching for *Grassroots*

What does it mean to "do writing research?" For the *GWRJ*, it means people observing, investigating, critiquing, and even participating in the activities that humans engage in that involve literate practice.

But what does it really mean? In more practical language, it means finding some situation where humans are doing things that involve language (which can mean composing in genres that are oral, aural, visual, etc., not just writing on paper) and thinking, "Hey, that looks interesting," then taking the time to investigate that practice in some detail.

But this kind of research isn't just about people. It's really about what we call "activity systems," which just means that we want to learn about all kinds of complicated interactions, not just what a particular kind of text looks like or what a particular person does when they produce a text (although we are interested in those things too). We also want to know about the interactions between people as they produce texts, as well as the interactions between humans and their tools, practices, and different kinds of textual productions. And we are interested in how certain kinds of texts work to shape our interactions; for example, the ways the genre of resumes might shape how people interact when they engage in the activities of finding and offering work.

To help researchers who might be thinking about or engaging in literate practices that they'd like to investigate, we have created this list of research projects that might be interesting or appropriate for the *GWRJ*:

Investigating Genres

These kinds of research projects usually investigate the nuances of particular genres: how they are made and who makes them, the distinctive features they have, who uses them, how and where they are used, and how they do particular kinds of communicative work in the world. This research is often straightforward, and—as some of the articles in our early issues reveal—this kind of genre investigation might have a "how-to" feel because many of the authors creating these pieces are also trying to learn how to produce that genre. However, genre investigations can move far beyond these "how-to" pieces. There are countless ways that genres can be examined in relation to how they do work in the world, such as by investigating technological and social implications that our readers would be interested in. Following genres to see where they go and the kinds of work they are made to do can take an author well beyond simply describing the features of a particular kind of text. One issue of concern to the *GWRJ* editors is that genre investigations can problematically "fix" genres—that is, situate them as stable productions that are always the same. So we encourage researchers to consider the ways in which genres constantly move and shift over time and in different situations.

Personal Explorations of Literate Practice

This kind of research is often closely connected to genre investigations. Authors examine their own practices in order to discover how they have learned to produce certain kinds of writing in certain situations, or they investigate particular kinds of composing practices, such as different practices for engaging in research or revision. Like genre investigations, these kinds of projects sometimes have a "how-to" focus as authors learn to think about—and explain to others—the things they know (or are coming to know) about different literate practices.

Composing Practices

This kind of research looks at particular composing practices, including invention (coming up with ideas), research, revision, etc. It often overlaps with personal exploration research because authors are usually investigating their own practices. However, this research could certainly involve interviews or observations of how other individuals or groups engage in these practices. One issue that concerns the *GWRJ* editors is that this kind of research can lead to assumptions that these composing practices are "universal"; that is, people might assume that composing practices work in similar ways across all kinds of genres and writing situations. While it is possible to trace similar kinds of literate activities or composing practices across different situations (and, in fact, it can be really interesting—see, for example, Kevin Roozen's writing research, "Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student's Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes"), it is important to remember that we really can't talk about an activity like "revising," for example, as if it is something that a person does the same way in every kind of situation.

Literate Activity in the Wild

While writing in classrooms or for school settings can often seem very cut-and-dried, these practices are more complicated than they seem. Part of the reason we do not see the complications of many kinds of literate practices is that once we become "embedded" in the activity, it no longer seems complicated to us! We know how to do it, but we don't really remember how we learned to do it. Another reason that we sometimes miss the complications of writing is that there are "tropes"—or particular ways of defining/understanding these practices—that make them look simple and straightforward. An example of this is the activity of "writing a paper," which can bring up very stylized and simplistic images of how a person just sits down, does some research, and then writes a paper for a particular class. But in fact, not only are the acts of researching and composing much more complicated than this limited view might offer, but also, this kind of literate practice is actually much more interactive than we might generally think. The *GWRJ* is interested in investigations that look at specific situations/locations where all kinds of literate acts are happening. We want to see researchers "unpacking" what is actually happening when people try to compose particular kinds of texts in particular situations. We are also interested in research that looks at the ways that textual production is interactive—how it involves all kinds of interactions between different people and different objects, tools, and other entities over time. This kind of research can involve the interactions of people and genres as well as different cultural norms and practices.

Case Studies of Individual Literate Practices

This type of research focuses very closely on particular individuals and the kinds of literate practices they engage in in their daily lives. Some of our previously published articles that take this approach include research into the ways an individual learns to interact with a particular genre or particular literate situation. But we are also very interested in research that looks at literate practice more broadly and deeply. So, for example, how does an individual take composing practices from one situation and apply them to another? How does an individual learn to interact within a particular setting in which different types of genres are being produced (so, say, a new kind of work environment)? This kind of research can be constructed as a collaborative process in which one researcher acts as an observer while the other engages in an exploration of their personal practices.

Linguistics Writing Research

Previous work that exists in the journal in this area tended to focus specifically on grammar conventions or on the usage of particular kinds of stylistic or punctuation devices. However, we have noted our desire to encourage linguistic writing research that is more robust and complicated, including projects that explore corpus linguistics (using a collection of data to look at particular kinds of textual practice) or sociolinguistics (investigating the particular ways that humans use language within social systems). In the last several issues we have seen authors take up this call in interesting ways. Issues 7.1 and 7.2, for example, include articles featuring research into the role of language variation and its effects on both meaning-making and composing practices. See Agathe Lancrenon's article "Everything You Need to Know About Transferring Metaphorical Ducks" and Cristina Sánchez-Martín's article "Language Variation Across Genres: Translingualism Here and There" in issue 7.1. And, in issue 7.2, see Su Yin Khor's article "Multilingual Notes as a Tool to Understand Super Dense Readings." We look forward to continuing to publish additional studies that investigate these concepts in innovative ways.

Global or Intercultural Literate Practices

It is only within a few issues of the journal that the *GWRJ* has been able to publish research on literate practices as they move across cultural and/or geographical spaces. For examples, see Adriana Gradea's article in issue 3.2, "The Little Genre That Could: CHAT Mapping the Slogan of the Big Communist Propaganda"; Summer Qabazard's article in issue 3.2, "From Religion to Chicken Cannibalism: American Fast-Food Ads in Kuwait"; Wesley Jacques's article in issue 7.1, "The E-Cat's Meow: Exploring Activity in Translingual Mobile Gaming"; or Sanam Shahmiri's article in issue 7.2, "Translating the Untranslatable: Making Meaning of Idiomatic Expressions Across Languages." We would like to encourage more of this kind of research in future issues as we are highly interested in research that studies the ways that people and textual practices move across these kinds of boundaries.

The Researcher's Process

According to one of our *GWRJ* authors, Lisa Phillips, it can be useful for authors to investigate and articulate a personal process that will be meaningful for them when developing ideas for research projects. She offered us her notes on the process that she followed to create her article for the journal in issue 3.2, "Writing with Tattoo Ink: Composing That Gets Under the Skin." Her process is presented below in ten "steps" that *GWRJ* authors might find useful:

Step One

Come up with a general "topic" description. So the first question to answer is: "What is it about writing in the world that interests me?"

Step Two

As the process continues, think more specifically about the genre, setting, and/or specific practices under investigation. (Using the types of research we have listed above can be useful for focusing a topic.) So the second question an author might want to answer is: "How will I go about finding what I want to know?"

Step Three

Next, think about both the research practices that will be needed to gather data as well as the style of article that will be most appropriate. One excellent way to do this is to read existing articles and examine the different ways that authors have approached different topics and different kinds of research.

Step Four

Because *Grassroots* articles are a fairly unique kind of writing, authors may find it useful to consider past writing experiences that they might be able to draw on as they write. We call these "antecedent genres," and they can be important to think about because these prior experiences always shape how an author writes, especially when they are writing in a new and unfamiliar genre. While these antecedent genres will certainly be useful, they can also cause problems because aspects of an author's past writing may not exactly fit with the style, tone, or content that is appropriate for *GWRJ* articles. Some questions to ask here are: "What kinds of writing do I already know how to do that I can use to help me? How are they similar and how are they different?"

Step Five

It can also be important to think about "target genres," or types of writing that might be used as examples during the research and writing process. Obviously, previously published *GWRJ* articles can be useful in this way, but it can also be interesting to think of other kinds of writing that might serve as examples. Writing research in the field of rhetoric and composition can be useful (for example, books and articles found on the WAC Clearinghouse website at *http://wac.colostate.edu*), but other kinds of research into social practices or even different kinds of journalism can be used as interesting models.

Step Six

Consider what kinds of visuals a text might need. Visual examples of different kinds of writing can add interest and information to a text but copyright issues will need to be considered. Charts, graphs, and other illustrations that highlight important aspects of the data you have collected can also be important.

Step Seven

Thinking carefully about what information (data) is needed to make the article credible and useful for readers is a critical step. Thus, once an author has made decisions about the type of research they want to do, it will also be important for them to make a plan for how to do that research. Will it be necessary to visit sites where writing is happening? Interview people about how they produce or use different kinds of writing? Find historical examples of types of writing?

Step Eight

If the article is going to include observations of people's writing activities, interviews, or surveys, you will need to obtain the proper permission. The interview/image consent form for *GWRJ* articles can be found on our website: *http://isuwriting.com/research-and-release-forms/*.

Step Nine

Although the *GWRJ* does not require any particular style of citation, we do require that authors cite all of their information. The editors will help authors think about what needs to be cited and how it can be done, but authors will want to think about the best way to cite. This includes considering the different ways that citation works in different kinds of writing; for example, scholarly journal articles cite very differently than newspaper or magazine articles or blog posts. Sometimes the style of citation can really affect how a reader thinks about the information in an article, so it is important to think not only about what to cite but also how to cite it.

Step Ten

As the text is being produced, it is critical to keep in mind the needs and interests of *GWRJ* readers. They are interested in reading about a wide range of topics, and they enjoy articles written in a wide range of styles. Because our readers have such a wide range of interests, it is important not to take them for granted. Writing that is interesting, lively, and accessible is important, but perhaps the most important thing to remember is that your research, no matter how it is presented, represents your knowledge and thinking about a topic related to writing that is important to you. And since we are all writers and all of us are learning all the time about how to "do writing" in the world, sharing your knowledge is, ultimately, an act of community.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the journal or any of the articles, you can send queries to grassrootswriting@gmail.com. Part of our mission is to welcome and encourage all kinds of writing research, so if you have an idea that you want to develop, please do not hesitate to share it with us.

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